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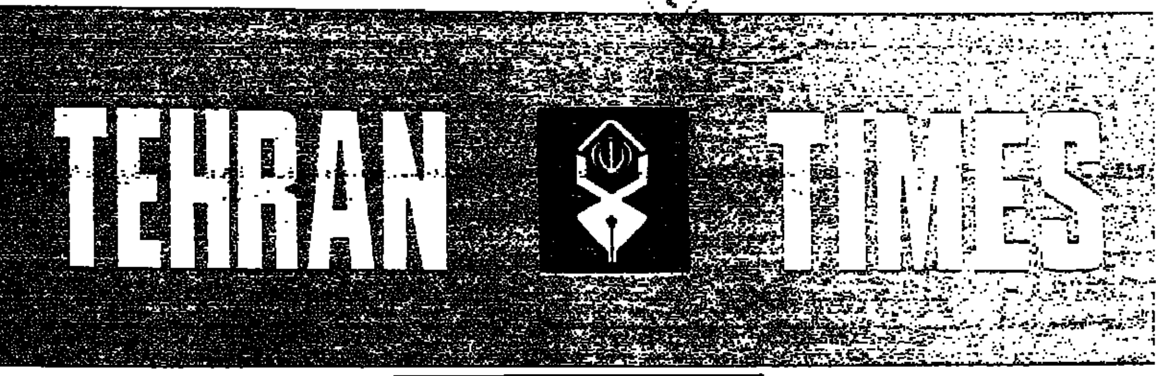
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Five Palestinians Injured in Al-Khalil Clashes

AL-KHALIL, West Bank — Five Palestinian demonstrators were injured by rubber bullets fired by Israeli troops during clashes in the West Bank town of Al-Khalil on Friday.

Around 100 young Palestinians hurled stones at soldiers posted at the entrance to a district under Israeli control in the divided town. The soldiers replied with tear-gas and rubber bullets.

(Contd on Pg. 14)



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President Rafsanjani Accepts King Fahd's Invitation

Tehran Times Service

TEHRAN — President Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani will officially visit Saudi Arabia on the invitation of King Fahd delivered to him by Prince Abdullah on the sideline of the OIC meeting in Islamabad.

Although no date has thus far been fixed for the visit, given the limited period of his tenure, President Rafsanjani's visit will be most likely during the Hajj ceremonies.

(Contd on Pg. 14)

Rafsanjani's Visit to Saudi Arabia, New Horizon in Iran-Saudi Relations

By Ali Rezvani Moqaddam

MEDINA — The exchange of visits between high-ranking officials of Iran and Saudi Arabia will materialize in the near future, Iran's Ambassador to Riyadh Hojjatoleslam Nouri Shahroodi told the *Tehran Times*.

During a meeting between Saudi Crown Prince and President Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani on the sideline of the OIC Conference in Islamabad, Prince Abdullah on behalf of Saudi King Fahd, invited Rafsanjani to visit Saudi Arabia, he said.

Hojjatoleslam Nouri Shahroodi added that President Rafsanjani has warmly accepted the invitation and will visit Saudi Arabia during Hajj ceremonies if the administrative procedures are fulfilled for this purpose, otherwise he will visit Saudi Arabia later.

Nouri added, we hope that King Fahd's health condition let him visit Tehran. If King Fahd could not visit Iran, Crown Prince Abdullah will participate in Tehran's OIC summit.

Iran-Saudi relations are steadily expanding as the two sides are determined to rapidly improve political and economic ties, Nouri stated.

The ambassador added that Iran and Saudi Arabia are two important Muslim countries in the Persian Gulf region. If they improve cooperation at regional and international levels, most of the regional problems will be solved. Such a cooperation will be helpful for all Muslims of the region.

Referring to the baseless accusations charging Iran of involvement in Al-Dahran explosion which killed 19 Americans, Nouri said that it was not the first time baseless accusations were directed against Iran. When an untoward event occurs in any part of the world, the global arrogance and Zionists regime point fingers towards Iran in order to fish in troubled water, but after the facts are disclosed, their conspiracy is foiled. Other countries find Iran a friendly country which doesn't interfere in any country's internal affairs.

The ambassador said, "For instance, remember the explosion in Argentina three years ago, the Western media baselessly accused Iran of involvement in the incident, but today it is obvious to every body that those behind the explosion were Argentinians who could no more tolerate Zionist pressure on their country. Now Argentine-Iran relations have improved again and Zionist regime's conspiracy against the Islamic Republic of Iran foiled.

He referred to the explosion of the TWA plane in sky and said, at first the U.S. accused Iran, but later it was disclosed that the plane was targeted by a missile from a U.S. warship.

The ambassador strongly denied Iran's involvement in Al-Dahran explosion and said that plots were hatched by the U.S. and the Zionist regime to destroy Iran-Saudi friendly ties.

(Contd on Pg. 14)

Leader's New Year Message Calls For Promotion of Virtue

TEHRAN — Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyed Ali Khamenei aired a message on 'Norouz' marking the advent of spring and the new solar Hijra year 1376, which this year falls on the eve of the auspicious birth anniversary of the 8th infallible Imam of Prophet Mohammad's (S) Household, Hazrat Ali ibn Musa al-Reza (AS).

The leader congratulating the nation on the occasion, said the New Year would be of much significance if the Iranians abided by more virtues and paid attention to spiritual values so as to gain proximity to God the almighty.

Fortunately, he said, the Iranian people, especially the youth, are spiritually sound, and that further public progress in this sphere would turn the society into an ideal one.

Ayatollah Khamenei felicitated the different strata of the Iranian society as well as other Muslim countries on the occasion of 'Norouz' or New Year Day, which marks the spring equinox and is celebrated in Iran and several neighboring countries.

The solar calendar which is in official use in Iran, unlike the Christian gregorian one which most Muslim countries are forced to follow in order to keep pace with the changing seasons, is like its lunar Hijra counterpart, based on the auspicious migration of Prophet Mohammad (S) in 622 A.D. from Mecca to Medina on the 1st of the month of Rabi al-Awwal (incidentally 'Rabi' in Arabic means spring).

He said that if a society succeeds in putting aside indecencies and reply such weaknesses as jealousy, malevolence and atrocity with lofty virtues of patience, modesty, and faith and trust in God, then such a society could be turned into a paradise on earth.

Elsewhere in his message, the Supreme Leader said the rich and developed countries of the world are suffering from lack of moral values, but thanks to Islam, the traditions and moral virtues of the Iranian people have not been affected.

However, he added, there are still many shortcomings which should be removed, and it is the duty of the youth to struggle against indecencies and resist the temptations, which act as an obstacle to spiritually elevation.

The country should be rebuild in accordance with Islamic criteria and the devastations of the eight-year Iraqi imposed war (1980-88) and vestiges of monarchial decadence, he said.

Turning to the upcoming presidential elections, the ayatollah called on the Iranian nation to turn out for the polls and cast their votes with foresightedness, prudence and with keen presence of mind, regarding it as a national and historical issue.

He called on people to elect the future president with overwhelming majority of votes in order to enable him contribute to the country's development and to disappoint enemies of Islam outside.

The Leader termed the year that went by as a year of glory for the Islamic system internationally.

On the domestic scene, he said, the Iranian nation, despite the propaganda and threats of arrogant powers maintained their magnificent presence at rallies and gatherings on various occasions in support for the system and officials.

Ayatollah expressed grief over the havoc caused by the recent quakes in the northwestern province of Ardebil and the north-

(Contd on Pg. 14)


Photo: Kaveh Ahmadi

Arab League Says Freeze on Ties With Israel is Binding

NETANYAHU HOLDS OUT THREAT OF ARMY'S RETURN TO SELF-RULE AREAS



DUBAI — The Arab League's decision to freeze normalization with Israel is binding on its member states, the organization's secretary general said here Thursday.

"The recommendation was unanimously approved. There was no reservation, so under the league's charters it commits the member countries," Esmat Abdel Meguid, who was in Dubai for an EU-Arab meeting, told a press conference.

He added however that Egypt and Jordan were not affected because they already have peace treaties with Israel, in contrast to "those who started a normalization by opening offices or diplomatic missions."

An official at the Cairo-based Arab League said Tuesday that its recommendation will go into effect in 10 days.

Several foreign ministers said during a league ministerial meeting on Sunday and Monday in the Egyptian capital that all Arab countries would uphold the decision.

The league "recommended a halt to all measures of normalization with Israel within the framework of the peace process (and), the closure of bureaus and missions until Israel abides by the principles of the (1991) Madrid Conference."

League members also "recommended the suspension of Arab

(Contd on Pg. 14)

Baghdad Condemns U.S. Official Visit to Northern Iraq

BAGHDAD, Iraq — Iraq Thursday said a visit to its Kurdish north by a senior U.S. official was tantamount to an act of aggression and interference in its internal affairs.

A Foreign Ministry spokesman, quoted by the official Iraqi News Agency, said the State Department's David Welch "entered northern Iraq illegally under the pretext of mediating to end fighting between Kurdish factions."

"This behavior falls within the continued acts of aggression and interference in Iraq's internal affairs," the unnamed spokesman said.

Welch visited northern Iraq several times during the past year to reconcile the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan and the Kurdistan

(Contd on Pg. 14)

Condolences

Mr. Abbas Abdi,
Editor-in-Chief of the Salam

Please accept our condolences on the sad death of your beloved wife. We pray to Almighty Allah to bless you with health and fortitude. May the soul of your diseased wife rest in peace and the Almighty bless the bereaved family with relief and fortitude.

Managing Director, Editor-in-Chief,
and the staff of the Tehran Times

Israel Prevents Palestinian Pilgrims From Going to Mecca

RAFAH, Gaza Strip — Israel has turned back 37 Palestinians trying to leave the Gaza Strip to make the Muslim pilgrimage to Mecca, detaining one person, a Palestinian official said Friday.

Said Sayfan, Palestinian head of security at the Rafah crossing point into Egypt, said Israeli security services prevented the would-be pilgrims from crossing in the past week and sent them back to the self-rule areas.

They also detained Said Zoroub, 44, on suspicion of be-

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In the Name of God

Abiding therein for ever; surely Allah has a Mighty reward with Him.

(HOLY QORAN) (9:22)

OPINION

The Islamic Republic Day, Iran, Strong and Stable After 18 years

On Farvardin 12, 1358 (1979) an absolute majority of Iranian nation voted for the establishment of the Islamic Republic to abolish the 2500-year-old monarchical system.

Mohammad Reza was reinstalled in a U.S.-sponsored coup after overthrowing the elected government of premier Mohammad Mosaddeq in August 1953. Washington saved the Shah's throne as an illegitimate quid pro quo for Shah's absolute subservience to the White House.

During the several decades of bloody struggle against the Shah, the Iranian nation had desired to eliminate the monarchy. The aspirations of Iranian nation embodied in the three main slogans which the nation chanted during the anti-Shah demonstrations in 1978-79: Independence, Freedom, and Islamic Republic.

After the nation sent the monarchy to the history's garbage can, Iran practically attained independence and people's freedom was guaranteed through the establishment of the Islamic Republic.

The challenges that the Iranian nation has had to face after the overthrow of the monarchy have been tough and serious, for the Islamic Revolution has put an end to the illegitimate interests of foreign powers, specially the United States of America.

From the morrow of the triumph of the Islamic Revolution foreign powers and their domestic agents began their plots to undermine the nascent Islamic Revolution. But the Islamic Revolution has remained firm despite all enemy's nasty plots.

It would not be an exaggeration if we claim that the Islamic Republic of Iran is the world's most independent country. The powers with vested interests in Iran and in the region cannot therefore see an independent Iran. Hence the plots to topple the Islamic system. The path to independence has been rather a very difficult one. We have thus far faced numerous challenges including U.S.-engineered military coups, armed insurgencies, the Imposed War and even direct U.S. military intervention. But such plots could not inflict slightest damage ...to the firm foundations of the Islamic Republic of Iran.

People's aspiration for freedom which appeared in their second slogan during the anti-Shah demonstrations has been materialized to a satisfactory extent. Since the victory of the Islamic Revolution the Iranian nation has elected all its presidents in fair elections. We have had regular elected parliaments. The Council of Experts was elected by the people which in turn elected Ayatollah Khamenei as Leader after the departure of Imam Khomeini. The democratic institutions, functioning regularly, are the most outstanding features of the Islamic Republic of Iran which are unique in the region. Although we do not have political parties, we have political groups which function like parties. Steps have already been taken for the establishment of political parties. The Iranian nation is eagerly waiting for the formation of political parties.

Though we have established the Islamic Republic of Iran, neither the Iranian nation nor the officials believe that the system is a perfect one. We have so many unfulfilled desires that we expect to be materialized as we march ahead towards the perfection of the Islamic system. The very establishment of the Islamic Republic has partially fulfilled people's aspiration embodied in the third slogan of the nation.

Despite unpredictable challenges, the Islamic Republic of Iran has had a convincing progress in spiritual and material fields. We have put behind the eight-year imposed war and reconstructed major parts of the war-ravaged areas. The number of dams, factories, manufacturing units, educational institutes, etc., built in the aftermath of the imposed-war are quite astonishing. The progress made after the collapse of monarchy is amazing, for the U.S. has already resorted to sanctions diplomacy against the Islamic Republic of Iran.

The most stable country in the region, Iran has close and friendly relations with almost all countries, except the U.S.—a bullying power—and the Zionist regime which is expansionist by nature.

Iran's role in the strategic region of the Persian Gulf and Central Asia cannot be overlooked. The Islamic Republic of Iran is ready to expand its relations with all countries of the world—of course except the U.S. and the Zionist regime—and cooperate with other countries to strengthen international peace and security.

President's New Year Message Outlines Country's Achievements

TEHRAN — President Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani aired a message of congratulations to the nation on the advent of 'Nowrouz' marking the start of solar year 1376 Hejira.

The president's message mainly focused on the administration's function and drew a comparison between situation in the past and today. He thanked Iranians for their presence on the scenes and their support for his government in enabling to fulfil its objectives.

Hojjatoleslam Rafsanjani who is nearing the end of his second term as president and as per the constitution is not eligible for a third, recalled the situation immediately after the eight-year sacred defense (1980-88) when he assumed the presidential post, and



said the achievements today would make one to be satisfied and thankful to the Almighty God.

He said the cultural, economic and political indices of the country were positive, and that the religious minorities along with their Muslim compatriots cooperate with the government sincerely. On the international scene, the president said, Iran is in an enviable position with even the enemies acknowledging the Islamic Republic's success in all dimensions.

Iran has succeeded in offering to the world the model of a successful revolution, defense, development and reconstruction, he added.

Culturally speaking, the Iranian people are one of the world's healthiest nations for their adherence to the teachings of the holy Qur'an, their cultural norms and their attention to traditional values, said the president.

This year, he said, there was a surplus of over $ 2.5 billion in foreign trade with the foreign exchange deposits reaching up to more than $ 10 billion from practically zero.

He put Iran's production rate at 75 percent and said the rate of investment has risen by 18 percent as well which is indicative of the pace of development during the two 5-year plans.

Speaking of the country's health, he said, as world health centres acknowledge, Iran is ahead in the area of prevention of diseases, making the environment hygienically clean.

Iran has gained much success in the areas of petrochemicals, oil, mining, maritime industries and exploitation of undersea resources, said Rafsanjani.

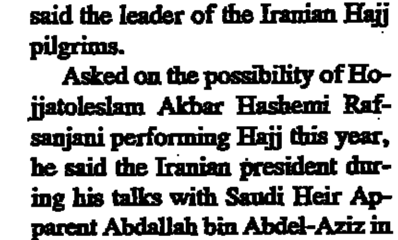
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Global Arrogance Against Promotion of Iran-Saudi Ties

Ali Rezvani Moqaddam

MEDINA, March 30 — Leader's Representative in Hajj pilgrims Hojjatoleslam Mohammad Mohammadi Rayshahri said here last Sunday that promotion of bilateral relations between Islamic Iran and Saudi Arabia will be in the interests of Islam and Muslim communities. Such relations will also be against the will and interests of global arrogance and the enemies of Islam.

Rayshahri said closer relations between Islamic countries will be against the arrogant powers and this is the reason behind the conspiracies to sow discord among Islamic states.



Describing the goals of the Islamic Republic of Iran of the Hajj pilgrimage, he said that based on the guidelines of the Leader of the Islamic Revolution, Ayatollah Seyed Ali Khamenei, one of the important objectives of the Hajj is to make efforts to forge unity and closer relations among the different Islamic communities.

We have no other objective except the dignity of Islam and the Islamic peoples, added Rayshahri.

We believe if the adherents of the different schools of Islamic thought observe Hajj freely and according to their own discernment it will pave the way for closer relations. The Muslims would feel that the house of God (Ka'ba) and the place of revelation belongs to all the ummah, and the Saudi government, as the servent of Ka'ba, would make efforts to strengthen Islamic unity, he said.

Our expectations are that Saudi Arabia should coordinate views with the Islamic Republic of Iran and should help efforts for bringing Muslims closer and for proximity between Islamic schools in order to strengthen the Islamic world and confront the enemies, said the leader of the Iranian Hajj pilgrims.

Asked on the possibility of Hojjatoleslam Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani performing Hajj this year, he said the Iranian president during his talks with Saudi Heir Apparent Abdallah bin Abdel-Aziz in Islamabad, Pakistan, last week, was invited for the Hajj, but has not yet taken any decision in this regard.

If President Rrafsanjani attends this year's Hajj, his visit will strengthen bilateral relations and will bring the governments of the Islamic Republic of Iran and Saudi Arabia closer, said Rayshahri, who is a presidential candidate for the forthcoming elections in Iran, slated for May 21.

Prince Abdullah Confirms Participation in OIC Summit in Tehran

ISLAMABAD — The Saudi Crown Prince Abdullah Bin Abdul Aziz welcomed participation in the summit of Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC) in December this year in Tehran and told the Iranian President that he will personally attend the Tehran summit.

The two leaders held a formal meeting at the convention centre in Islamabad Sunday where they were present to attend the OIC extra-ordinary summit and Pakistan Golden Jubbly Celebrations.

Rafsanjani and Abdullah exchanged views on ways to improve bilateral relations between the two countries.

Rafsanjani said he was satisfied with the continuing efforts to improve relations with Saudi Arabia. He said both countries were willing to further improve ties , saying cordial relations between the two countries will guarantee maintenance of security and stability in the region.

He condemned those who would not like to see good relations between Iran and Saudi Arabia and added that these forces were trying to spoil mutual understanding and expansion of ties through disinformation.

Speaking on the occasion the Saudi Crown Prince said cordial relations between Iran and Saudi Arabia are beneficial to the entire Muslim ummah.

Both sides stressed the need for exchange of high ranking officials of the two countries to achieve the goal of reconciliation and remove misunderstandings between the two Islamic neihgbors. *(IRNA)*

Iran-Libya Ties, Muslim World Problems Discussed

QADDAFI ACCEPTS INVITATION TO ATTEND TEHRAN OIC SUMMIT

TRIPOLI, Libya, March 30 — Foreign Ministers of Iran and Libya here Saturday night discussed bilateral ties as well as key issues of the world of Islam including the holy Qods and the Organization of Islamic Conference (OIC).

Carrying President Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani's message to Libyan Leader Muammar Qaddafi, ran's Foreign Minister arrived here from Dakar, Senegal via Tunisia by land Saturday.

In his message the president invited Qaddafi to attend the 8th summit meet of the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC) to be held in Tehran in December.

Discussing the latest developments in Africa, the Libyan Secretary for Foreign Liaison and International Cooperation Omar Al-Muntasser briefed Velayati on the recent meeting held in Togo on the developments in Zaire.

The two sides also reviewed the results of the 16th meeting of the Al-Qods standing committee of the OIC held in Rabat recently and said the final statement was stronger than usual.

In an interview after arrival, Velayati said despite the numerous developments in the region and the world, Tehran-Tripoli relations have remained friendly and close.

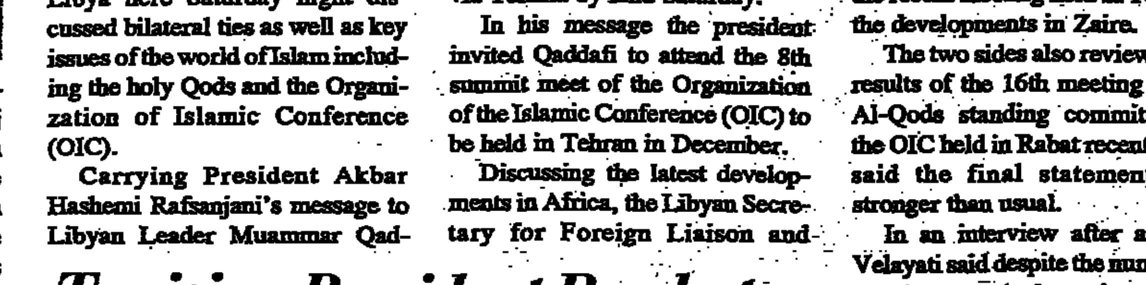
Foreign Minister Velayati expressed hope that the two Muslim countries of Iran and Libya in cooperation with one another will play a constructive and positive role in materialization of ideals and aspirations of the world of Islam.

The UN Security Council has imposed flight sanctions on Libya since April 1992.

Libyan Leader Muammar Qaddafi accepting President Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani's invitation said he would attend the 8th summit of the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC) in Tehran in December this year.

Qaddafi, meeting with Iran's Foreign Minister Ali Akbar Velayati, expressed hope that the Te-

(Contd on Pg. 14)



Tunisian President Ready to Attend 8th OIC Summit

TUNISIA, April 1 - Foreign Minister Ali Akbar Velayati in a meeting with Tunisian President, Zeinulabedin bin Ali here on Tuesday submitted President Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani's invitation message to his counterpart for attending the 8th OIC summit to be held in Tehran in December 1997.

Bin Ali, welcoming the invitation, said the summit should be taken as an opportunity for the establishment of Muslim unity and creation of consensus among the Muslims of the world.

The Tunisian President said that Iran and Tunisia owned age-old relations and traditions and that any halt in bilateral ties in the past would not affect long-term relations between the two countries.

He expressed satisfaction with convention of the ministerial session of Tehran-Tunisia Joint Economic Commission, adding that another joint session is expected to be held in Tunis in the near future.

Bin Ali further stated that the session would avail the two countries with the chance to establish mutual cooperation.

Velayati for his part underlined that Iran is determined to expand its relations with Tunisia.

He said that relations between Tehran and Tunis could have an important role in Muslim world's solidarity in view of Iran's status in Islamic east and of Tunisia in Islamic west. *(IRNA)*

Leader: Islam 2nd Religion of Americans

TEHRAN — Leader of the Islamic Revolution the Grand Ayatollah Seyed Ali Khamenei said in the holy city of Mashhad (Khorasan Province) that despite American rulers' opposition, Islam is second religion of American people.

The Supreme Leader, who was addressing large groups of pilgrims gathering at the holy shrine of the Eighth Imam of Prophet Mohammad's (S) infallible household Hazrat Ali ibn Mousa al-Reza (AS), said that Islam is growing in America, Europe, Africa and Far East for its strong and firm reasoning and logic.

He said that it's a divine promise that God's religion would spread round the earth and all human beings' cultures and false government systems would submit to God's religion.

He added that Islam enjoys two important tools to dominate the world: strong and firm reasoning and logic and also social justice in the real and absolute sense of the word. The Grand Ayatollah said that Islam can captivate human beings' hearts through these two firm and strong levers and defeat all flimsy logics.

Touching on Zionist regime's crimes in the region, Ayatollah Khamenei said that no system in the world is as disgraced as the Zionist regime for its inclination towards tyranny and terrorism.

He added that Zionist rulers commit the most heinous crimes against Arabs and Muslims before world people's eyes. Yet they are supported by the U.S. when faced by criticism. *(IRNA)*

Kharrazi Calls For UN Session on Issue of Jewish Settlements in Occupied Palestine

UNITED NATIONS HQ. (New York) — Iran's permanent representative to the world body, Dr. Seyed Kamal Kharrazi said that the Zionist regime's heinous and illegal behavior such as occupation of others' lands, has been indeed encouraged by the inaction of the United Nations Security Council owing to the manifest and unqualified support of a permanent member of the council, namely the United States.

Kharrazi, who was addressing the special session of members of the Organization of Islamic Conference (OIC) on Wednesday night, said the Zionist decision to build Jewish settlements in East Bait-ul- Moqaddas was encouraged by the United States in using its veto right against the adoption of even the mildest resolution deploring the unlawful and brutal Israeli actions.

He said Iranian officials believed that the request for convening a special session of the UN General Assembly was an appropriate and timely proposal which deserves the support of the OIC.

He added that the continued policy of expansionism adopted by the Israeli regime in building settlements in occupied Palestine and recently in East Bait-ul-Moqaddas has caused outrage and grave concern in the Islamic world.

Kharrazi regretted: It is plainly unfortunate to note that nothing can be achieved through the Security Council mechanism to oblige the Israeli regime to end its illegal actions and policies. *(IRNA)*

Velayati Hands President Rafsanjani's Message to King Hassan

RABAT — Iranian Foreign Minister Ali-Akbar Velayati on Thursday March 28 submitted President Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani's letter to King Hassan of Maghreb inviting the king to attend the 8th summit meet of the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC) to be held in Tehran in December.

Talking to reporters after the meeting, Velayati said that King Hassan welcomed the invitation and voiced his support for convention of the summit meet in Tehran.

He also quoted King Hassan as voicing willingness to take part in the Tehran summit and to extend all types of help to Tehran to host the summit in the best possible manner. *(IRNA)*

Ayatollah Kashani Cautions Muslims Against Enemy Plots



TEHRAN — Senior Alim Ayatollah Emami-Kashani in his Friday prayer sermons at Tehran University cautioned Muslim states to be on alert against the plots and conspiracies of the enemies of Islam.

He welcomed the recent stance of the Arab and Muslim states against the illegal Zionist entity, and expressed support for the oppressed Palestinian Muslims.

In his sermons Kashani condoled the Muslim Ummah on the 16th martyrdom anniversary of Ayatollah Seyed Baqer al-Sadr and his noble sister Bint-al-Hoda by Iraq's Ba'thist rulers.

Ayatollah Sadr who was in his late forties at the time of his arrest, torture and subsequent martyrdom, was the leader of the Islamic Movement in Iraq. An advocate of the Islamic system of economy, he wrote profusely on interest-free banking and authored such books as Iqtusadena (our economy) and Falsafatuna (our philosophy), which have been translated into many world languages including English.

Ayatollah Kashani recalled the auspicious 12th of Farvardin (1st April 1979), the day the people of Iran voted for the Islamic government.

He lauded the Grand Leader of Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyed Ali Khamenei for appointing President Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani as chairman of the Expediency Council.

On the presidential elections slated for May 23, he called on the public to vote for the one who would strive for realization of their lofty aspirations. *(IRNA)*

Iranian, Iraqi Foreign Ministers Meet

RABAT — The Iranian and Iraqi foreign ministers in a meeting here on March 27 exchanged views on latest developments in Tehran-Baghdad relations.

Iraqi Foreign Minister Muhammad Saeed as-Sahaf thanked Iran for its recent humanitarian action in unilaterally releasing a group of Iraqi prisoners of war (POWs) and said his country is willing to expand its relations with Iran.

Velayati, stressing the need for logical and proper relations among neighboring states, said that good neighborliness and mutual confidence were two basic conditions for improvement of Tehran-Baghdad ties.

He underlined the need for taking serious and practical steps to remove current obstacles on the way of bilateral relations and called for settlement of the issue concerning release of POWs and exchange of pilgrims.

The meeting was held on the sidelines of the ministerial meeting of the Al-Qods Committee of the Organization of Islamic Conference (OIC). *(IRNA)*

President Rafsanjani Inspects Quake-Stricken Villages in Ardebil

(Photo by: ABBAS TAKIN)

ARDEBIL — President Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani on March 27 visited Golestan and Shiran, two of the worst-hit villages of Ardebil Province.

The quake with a magnitude of 5.5 degrees on the open ended Richter damaged more than 100 villages, killing and wounding 3,600 people and leaving over 4,000 others homeless.

During his visit to Golestan President Rafsanjani thanked all who helped the quake-stricken people of Ardebil, assuring the villagers that the government will do its best to help the people affected by the disaster.

He added that in the wake of programs already in hand, construction work on the quake-hit areas will be completed by next winter.

Golestan and Shiran villages sustained 100 percent damage and 350 of their residents lost their lives as a result of the earthquake.

President Rafsanjani was accompanied by the leader's representative Hojjatoleslam Ghayuri, Minister of the Interior Ali Mohammad Besharati, Minister of Agriculture Issa Kalantari, and a number of other officials.

Deputy FM, Lebanese MP Discuss Tehran-Beirut Cooperation

TEHRAN — Iran's Deputy Foreign Minister for Communication Affairs, Morteza Sarmadi, and vice-speaker of the Lebanese Parliament in a meeting in Beirut on Thursday March 28 discussed expansion of Tehran-Beirut cooperation.

The two sides at the meeting exchanged views on bilateral relations, especially in the parliamentary field, as well as recent developments in the region following enforcement of new policies in the occupied land of Palestine by the Zionist entity.

Sarmadi, calling as significant the Lebanese government's stance in following a coordinated policy with Syria on the so-called peace process and on confrontation of Israel's cowardly acts, underlined the need for further coordination and solidarity among Muslim and Arab states. *(IRNA)*

Iran's Cultural Advisor to Turkmenistan Appointed

ASHKHABAD — Hassan Safarkhani was assigned as Iran's new cultural advisor in Ashkhabad, Turkmenistan, in a ceremony held at Turkmen Culture and Tourism Ministry on March 22 in presence of the visiting Iranian Culture and Islamic Guidance Minister Mostafa Mirsalim and his Turkmen counterpart.

Iranian and Turkmen ministers at the meeting explored ways of expanding bilateral cultural ties and underlined strengthening of mutual relations. *(IRNA)*

Landslide Destroys Nasir-Abad Village

TABRIZ, East Azarbaijan Province — Seventy percent of Nasir-Abad, a village near Ahar city in East Azarbijan Province of Iran has been destroyed as a result of landslide, it was announced on March 31.

The landslide in the region dates back to four years ago but it has intensified since a deadly earthquake shook nearby Ardebil Province on February 28.

Some 30 of the 65 families living in the village have been forced to evacuate their homes and live in Tabriz temporarily and the remaining 35 have taken shelter in the neighboring Mehtarlu village.

According to experts, Nasir-Abad can not be reconstructed and its inhabitants should be trasferred to a safe area.

The affeted families will receive free plots of land and soft loans of up to Rls.6.5 million to build their new homes somewhere else. *(IRNA)*

President Diouf Invited to Tehran Summit

DAKAR — Foreign Minister Ali Akbar Velayati handed over a letter of invitation of President Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani to President Abdou Diouf of Senegal on March 28.

President Rafsanjani has invited President Diouf to attend the 8th summit of the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC), to be held in Tehran next December.

President Diouf welcoming the invitation said that he will attend the Tehran summit and added Senegal will encourage African countries to have an active presence in the Tehran Summit.

Senegal chaired the 6th summit of the OIC which was held in Dakar in December 1991. *(IRNA)*

China Regrets Iran's Absence From Beijing Int'l Trade Fair

BEIJING, China — A Chinese official regretted that Iran would not participate in the Beijing Internationl Trade Fair.

The six-day international exhibition opened in the Chinese capial on April 3 with participation of 23 countries.

The press spokesman of the fair told IRNA that Iran had been among the successful participants in previous exhibitions held in Beijing.

Iran took part in Beijing International Trade Fair for the first time in 1995. The fair is held every two years.

Over 1500 companies from 23 countries namely Ukraine, Belarus, Canada, Mongolia, Russia, Bulgaria, Colombia, Czech Republic, Egypt, Germany, Hungary, Japan, Laos, Lithuania, South Korea, Poland, Romania, Singapore, Thailand, Turkey, Hong Kong, China and Israel displayed their products at this year's fair. *(IRNA)*

Kazakhstan Stresses Importance of Tehran OIC Summit

ALMATY — Kazakh Foreign Minister Kasymzhomart Tokayev stressed importance of the summit meeting of the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC) to be held in Tehran in December.

In a meeting with the Iranian Ambassador to Almaty Hassan Qashqavi March 26 Tokayev called for continuation of Iran's active participation in the conference on 'trust and cooperation in Asia' initiated by the Kazakh president.

The conference is aimed to promote trust and enhance cooperation among Asian countries.

He also welcomed further expansion and consolidation of Tehran-Almaty ties.

Qashqavi said that the OIC summit meet in Tehran and the summit meeting of the Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO) in Almaty in 1988 will pave the way for further cooperation between the two countries at regional and international levels. *(IRNA)*

Iran's Phone Lines to More Than Double by 2000

Tehran Times Service

TEHRAN - Iran's main telephone lines are to more than double by the year 2000 to 17.03 per 100 inhabitants, according to the International Telecommunication Union (ITU).

Its latest development report shows Iran's investing $2.3 billion per year on main telephone systems until the end of the decade, the second highest in the Middle East and North Africa after Turkey.

Iran's network of main telephone lines in 1995 was put at over 5 million, more than the 2.7 million in Egypt, the 2.1 million in Pakistan, the 1.7 million in Saudi Arabia, but behind Turkey's 13.2 million.

In contrast to the average two years waiting time for new phones in Iran, the time in Egypt was 5.7 years and over 10 years in Saudi Arabia. In Pakistan the time was only 0.7 years and in Turkey 0.6 years.

The ITU figures, quoted by *Middle East Economic Digest*, projected main lines in Iran between 1995 and 2000 growing from 7.57 to 17.03 percent, in Egypt from 4.63 to 8.4 percent, in Pakistan from 1.64 to 3.86 percent and in Saudi Arabia from 9.62 to 11.95 percent.



Iran's annual investment of $2.3 billion over the next five years dwarfed the average $1bn in Pakistan, the $773m in Egypt and $273 million in Saudi Arabia, but below Turkey's nearly $5 billion yearly investment.

Over Rls.3.53bn Worth of Shares Transacted

Tehran Times Service

TEHRAN - Some 958,465 shares, worth over Rls. 3.53 billion, were traded in 1,258 turns for 839 applicants at Tehran Stock Exchange during March 29-31.

Shares of 38 companies increased, while those of 20 others declined. Shares of 30 companies remained unchanged compared to the previous week.

General index price of shares for the week reached 1938.79 points, up by 2.04 points compared to the last week of the past Iranian year (ended March 20).

Iranian Red Crescent Society Renders Service in Africa

Tehran Times Service

TEHRAN - Head of Iran's Red Crescent Society Seifollah Vahid Dastjerdi said in Nairobi Thursday that the society intends to render medical services to the deprived people in Africa.

Commenting on his current tour of several African countries, he said that he is inspecting the clinics operated by the society to find out about their condition and the quality of service they offered.

At present the society has clinics in Niger, Mali and Ghana, he told IRNA adding that it intends to inaugurate a clinic in Kenya.

He expressed hope that the society would set up clinics in other African countries such as Tanzania.

The society's clinics in Ghana and Mali offer medical services to up to 500 patients a day, he concluded.

Kharrazi Hopes a New Day for People on Earth

Tehran Times Service

TEHRAN - Iran's permanent envoy to the UN Kamal Kharrazi said in New York on Thursday that the advent of the new solar



year is a good opportunity for thanksgiving, reconciliation, removal of disputes and also extending hand of friendship and love to all human beings on the earth.

Kharrazi, who made the remark at the Earth Day ceremony in New York said that at such a time people in Iran and in more than 17 Central and West Asian countries celebrate rejuvenation of nature in the spring, IRNA reported.

The UN headquarters has been holding special ceremonies annually under the name of the Earth's Universal Day for the past 25 years when the new year ceremonies are held in Iran marking the beginning of spring and the new year.

During the ceremony, 'the bell of peace,' offered by Japan, heralding peace was tolled at the un headquarters in New York to mark the wakening of nature in the spring.

Kharrazi expressed hope that this year and the first day of spring season would be a new day for all family members of the earth as well as a new day for vigilance and change in human beings' way of thinking about the earth and about mankind.

He said, 'let's be hopeful that such a new day would bring about further understanding of the needs for peace and coordination with all the creatures which are being fed on the earth.'

He expressed hope that the 'new day' this year would be the time for contemplation on human beings' age-old aspirations and for realization of justice, peace and coordination among all human beings.

The great idea of marking the first day of spring was first proposed by John McConnel, the Head of the Foundation for Earth Planet. This foundation is a nonprofit institute which its activities are based on the protection of the environment, echology, as well as human relation and nature.

Based on McConnel's proposal, UNESCO adopted it as 'Earth's Universal Day' on March 20, 1969.

EU to Wait for Japan's Port Practices Reforms

Tehran Times Service

TEHRAN - The European Union (EU) has agreed to wait and see Tokyo's efforts on changing harbor services at Japanese ports, Japanese Transport Ministry officials said Thursday in Tokyo.

The EU will not bring the issue before the World Trade Organization's dispute settling mechanism, the officials said, referring to talks held Wednesday by Tokyo and the EU in Brussels, an IRAN-Kyodo-OANA dispatch reported.

The talks concerned practices at Japanese ports, primarily the mandatory "prior consultation" requirement between shipping firms and the stevedore unions on selection of company to handle a ship's cargo six months prior to arrival.

This requirement is considered by the EU and the U.S. as undermining competition among stevedoring companies, and thereby disadvantaging foreign shipping firms seeking low-cost harbor services.

During the Japan-EU talks, Tokyo explained an interim agreement reached by shipping companies, including foreign firms, and Japanese cargo-handling companies to come up with simpler and more transparent procedures by the end of July, the officials said.

Separately, Japan opened talks with the U.S. on the issue in Washington on Wednesday, in a bid to avert possible sanctions by Washington, set to be implemented April 14.

Japanese port workers' unions, meanwhile, have launched strikes in opposition to the interim agreement. Workers refuse to provide services on weekends as well as nighttime service at ports throughout Japan.

Malaysian State to Send Investment Missions Overseas

Tehran Times Service

TEHRAN - The central Selangor state government will be sending four investment promotion teams abroad in a bid to maintain its position as one of the states attracting most foreign investments.

Chief Minister Muhammad Muhammad Taib said the delegation for Japan, South Korea and Taiwan would make the visit in May, followed by the mission to Italy, Ireland and Germany in July, to Canada and the U.S. in September, and to New Zealand and Australia in November, an IRNA-Bernama dispatch reported.

The missions will focus on the multimedia-oriented industry, aviation support business and the maritime and the automobile sectors, he told a news conference after attending the Selangor Investment Committee Meeting at his office in Shah Alam, near Kuala Lumpur on Wednesday.

He said the mission to Australia and New Zealand would study the livestock farming and dairy industry.

Muhammad said throughout 1966, the state approved investments worth $1.89 billion which involved 214 projects that created 2,117 new jobs.

This represented 27.4 percent of the total foreign investment flowing into the country for that year, he said.

Total investments in Selangor over the last 10 years had reached nearly $16.129 billion involving 2,163 manufacturing projects employing some 273,000 workers, he added.

Pope Calls For Close, Constructive Relations With Iran

ROME — Leader of the world Catholics, Pope John Paul II in the Vatican City announced willingness to have close and constructive relations with the Islamic Republic of Iran. He made the remark in a meeting with Iran's Ambassador to the Vatican City, Mohammad Masjed-Jamei.

Expressing satisfaction over the trend of bilateral ties in various areas, the Pope expressed hope that the trend will be maintained in future.

Meanwhile, Jean Louis Tauran, responsible for the Vatican's foreign relations, in a separate meeting with the Iranian ambassador expressed hope that Tehran-Vatican friendly relations would further broaden.

The meetings were held at the end of Masjed-Jamei's mission to the Vatican City. *(IRNA)*

Bulgarian Calls on Iran to Set Up a Hotel in Sofia

Tehran Times Service

TEHRAN - Iranian Ambassador to Sofia Baqer Golzarniya and Bulgarian head of tourism center in a meeting in Sofia on Friday discussed expansion of relations between Tehran and Sofia in the area of tourism.

The two sides at the meeting exchanged views on exchange of experts and delegations, mutual investment in the area of tourism, accelerating the process of promoting tourism and conduct of direct flights between Tehran and Sofia, IRNA said.

The Bulgarian official at the meeting proposed establishment of a hotel in Iranian architectural style in Sofia by Iran.

Chief UN Weapons Inspector in Baghdad for More Arms Talks

BAGHDAD, Iraq — Chief UN weapons inspector Rolf Ekeus arrived Thursday to investigate the extent of Iraq's chemical weaponry, a UN official said.

The official, who spoke on condition of anonymity, said a team of experts, including four in the field of chemical weapons, was accompanying Ekeus, a Swedish diplomat.

"The UN team will focus on the chemical issue but there will, of course, be other issues," the official told the Associated Press.

The official Iraqi News Agency later reported that Ekeus held talks with Deputy Prime Minister Tariq Aziz, but gave no details.

Iraq insists that thousands of liters of mustard gas and sarin it produced were destroyed after the 1991 Persian Gulf war, but UN experts say they have no evidence to support the Iraqi claim.

The experts want to close the files on chemical ammunition, including special warheads for missiles. They also want to close the files on the production and destruction of the chemical agents.

Last month, the UN and Iraq solved the issue of long-range missiles when Baghdad turned over missile parts to the UN experts.

The parts were shipped to the United States to determine if Iraq removed sophisticated Russian-made engines to sidestep UN orders to destroy high-tech weaponry.

Ekeus says Iraq may have removed the engines or engine parts and replaced them with virtually useless Iraqi-made components before destroying the missiles and burying them in 1991. *(AP)*

Iranian Hajj Pilgrims Commemorate 12th Farvardin

MEDINA — Iranian pilgrims to the House of God here on Tuesday commemorated the anniversary of the Islamic Republic's formation.

A number of pilgrims along with ulema had attended the ceremonies, held beside the tomb of Prophet Mohammad (SAWA).

Head of Iranian Pilgrims Mohammad Mohammadi-Reyshahri said at the meeting that triumph of Islamic Revolution had its roots in history of Islam and development of Iranian society.

Reyshahri said the goal behind Islamic Revolution in Iran was implementation of Islamic values and realization of social justice in light of the sovereignty of Islam. He said that no danger threatened Islamic Revolution from outside today. *(IRNA)*

SPORTS SUMM

FOOTBALL

TENNIS

CRICKET

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SPORTS SUMMARY

Tehran Times Service

FOOTBALL

French Goalkeeper Faces Drugs Accusation

PARIS: Top French goalkeeper Bernard Lama, missing from the national side for Wednesday's 1-0 victory over Sweden, has been accused of failing a drug test. According to reports late Thursday the 33-year-old Paris St. Germain player, who won his 35th cap playing in a friendly international against the Netherlands five weeks ago, was shown to have taken cannabis in a pre-match drugs test. The French Football Federation President Claude Simonet said he was not allowed to comment on the matter at the present time. If the accusations against Lama are proved, he will be the second French international found guilty of testing positive for cannabis.

The first was Fabien Barthez, who, ironically, was France's goalkeeper against Sweden on Wednesday. Barthez failed a similar test in October 1995 and was suspended for two months.

Barcelona Safely Through

BARCELONA, Spain: Barcelona, despite a depleted lineup, eased in to the final of the Spanish cup Thursday when they beat visiting second division Las Palmas 3-0 for a 7-0 aggregate win. Barcelona, without goalkeeper Baia or Brazilian striker Ronaldo, went clear through Oscar after 15 minutes. Luis Enrique made it 2-0 after half an hour and Fernando Couto put the issue beyond doubt with a third goal on the hour. Barcelona will now play Betis in the june 28 final. Betis came away 2-1 aggregate winners after holding Celta Vigo to a 1-1 draw in the away-leg return on Wednesday.

Capello Ponders Future

MADRID: Real Madrid Coach Fabio Capello will wait until mid-May before deciding if his future lies in Spain or a return to Italy.

Capello, who denied he had a problem with Real's Croatian striker Davor Suker, has been linked with Inter Milan, whose English coach Roy Hodgson takes over at English side Blackburn next season. Real President Lorenzo Sanz has promised Capello more big signings for an all-out assault on the champions league next year.

Albanian Players Seek Asylum

MADRID: Eight players and the coach of Albana's under-21 soccer side applied for political asylum here Thursday. Albania played Ukraine and Germany in under-21 internationals in Cadiz and Granada in the last five days after the matches were switched from Tirana because of the trouble in Albania. The senior squad, who played Germany in a World Cup qualifying match in Granada on Wednesday night, were due to fly out later on Thursday.

Jorge to Sue Attacker

LISBON: Portugal Coach Artur Jorge said Thursday he would sue Sporting Lisbon striker Ricardo sa Pinto, who attacked him last month after being dropped for a World Cup qualifying match against Northern Ireland. Sa Pinto, who claimed he had been insulted by Jorge, has been suspended from international football indefinitely by the Portuguese federation. Sporting Lisbon fined the player around 40,000 dollars.

TENNIS

Hingis Continues Winning Streak but Sanchez-Vicario Fails Again

HILTON HEAD, South Carolina: World number one Martina Hingis beat Austria's Barbara Schett 6-3, 6-3 here Thursday to reach the quarterfinals of the 926,250-dollar WTA event. The latest victory means that the 16-year-old Swiss, who now faces German qualifier Wiltrud Probst and who is bidding for her sixth title of 1997, has won all 28 WTA and Fed Cup matches she has played this year. South Africa's Amanda Coetzer also reached the last eight when she beat Spain's second-seeded Arantxa Sanchez-Vicario 6-2, 5-7, 6-0. She now faces another Spanish player — fifth-seeded Conchita Martinez who beat American Jennifer Capriati 6-0, 5-7, 6-4. Anke Huber of Germany also advanced with a 3-6, 7-6 (7/5), 6-3 win over Iva Majoli of Croatia while Witrud Probst of Germany took her place in the quarterfinals when eighth-seeded Romanian opponent Irina Spirlea retired while trailing 4-1 in the first set.

CRICKET

Sri Lanka Rout Zimbabwe

SHARJAH, United Arab Emirates: World champions Sri Lanka outplayed Zimbabwe by seven wickets in the opening match of the Three-Nation Sharjah Cup here on Thursday. After restricting Zimbabwe to a modest 187 for nine, the Sri Lankans romped home easily with 26 balls to spare at the Sharjah Cricket Stadium. Pakistan are the third team in the double-leg preliminary league in which the top two advance to the April 11 final.

ATHLETICS

Machado to Run London Marathon

LONDON: Reigning world champion Manuela Machado has entered this year's London marathon, which takes place on April 13. The Portuguese star will take on a high class field, including Britain's defending champion Liz McColgan.

Sydney Seat Sellers Admit Too Few People Are Buying

SYDNEY — Bankers trying to sell reserved seats for the 2000 Olympics to raise 344 million dollars (U.S.$272 million) for the main stadium admitted here Friday they are 214 million dollars — or 21,000 people — behind target.

At 10,000 dollars per "gold package" guaranteeing comfort and a splendid stadium view of blue ribbon events such as the 100 meters final, only 13,000 people have so far rushed to buy — instead of the 34,400 hoped for.

"Clearly we are disappointed that the offer has closed less than fully subscribed," said underwriters' spokeswoman Sue Cato.

"In hindsight there were a number of contributory factors including the complexity of the prospectus, delays in the launch of the offer and lack of certainty regarding events after the Sydney Games."

But she said with four years to go, organizers were confident there would be no problem in selling all of the packages which also guarantee free entry to events in the stadium for the next 30 years.

She said while there had been a shortall in gold package sales, the alternative and more expensive platinum offer had been fully subscribed.

Stadium Australia management chief executive Chris Chapman said the position of the underwriters had no bearing on the stadium's construction or its progress.

Stadium Australia and the government had received full payment, construction was on budget and on schedule to be complete in the first half of 1999.

(AFP)

Rafter to Open Against Damm

ADELAIDE, Australia — Pat Rafter, who sparked Australia's 4-1 first-round upset of defending Davis Cup champion France, will again play the opening match against the Czech Republic on Friday at memorial drive.

Rafter, who scored a five-set victory over Cedric Pioline at Sydney's White City in February, was Thursday drawn to play Martin Damm in the first singles of the world group quarterfinal.

Mark Philippoussis, Australia's highest-ranked singles player, will face Jiri Novak in the second singles match.

Todd Woodbridge and Mark Woodforde, the top-ranked doubles combination in the world, meet Czech pair David Rikl and Pavel Vizner in Saturday's doubles with the reverse singles slated for Sunday.

Australia, which has won the Davis Cup 26 times, is fielding its strongest combination on its favorite grass court surface, but the Czech Republic has been hit by the retirement from Davis Cup play of Stalwart Petr Korda and the unavailability of Bohdan Ulihrach, Daniel Vacek and Slava Dosedel.

Philippoussis will be playing a Davis Cup match in his homeland for the first time, while Woodforde will take a lesser role after starring in both singles and doubles in Australia's first-round win over France.

"We feel like we are a train in motion and we will be very hard to stop," said Australian captain John Newcombe. "But that doesn't mean we can't be stopped. The Czechs have some very accomplished players and we can't be overconfident.

"All our players are playing well, though, and we're confident we're ready to perform."

Philippoussis said he is convinced an ankle injury that troubled him during last week's Lipton championship, has completely healed.

"At the start of the week it was a bit swollen, but I've done some good work on it and I'm looking after it really well, so I'm confident of being 100 percent tomorrow," he said.

The Australians have been concerned by a lack of preparation as a team.

Woodbridge and Woodforde only arrived in Australia on Tuesday after winning the doubles title at the Lipton.

Damm, ranked 43rd in the world, will be the No. 1 singles player for the Czech Republic for the first time. He said the Czechs are not downhearted at fielding a weakened team.

"We've left some great players at home so we are at a little bit of a disadvantage, but we still have a good chance," he said.

"In Davis Cup you never know.

"The Australians are clearly the favorites. They have beaten France on grass, so that is to their advantage. But we are going to be ready.

"If we can make a good start, who knows?"

The winner will advance to play either the United States or the Netherlands in the semifinals.

(AP)

Paraguay Defeats Colombia, Takes First Place in Qualifier

ASUNCION, Paraguay — Derlis Soto scored in the 87th minute to give Paraguay a 2-1 victory over Colombia on Wednesday and first place in the South American qualifiers for the 1998 World Cup.

The match, a superb display of swift action, great passing and lots of chances to score was marred by violence near the end.

With barely 10 minutes to go in the game, Paraguayan goalie Jose Chilavert and Colombian striker Faustino Asprilla were expelled for starting a fist fight after referee Wilson Souza of Brazil awarded Colombia a penalty.

As Chilavert was leaving the field, he was attacked by striker Victor Aristizabal, who had been substituted, and the game was stopped for 8 minutes.

Carlos Gamarra opened the scoring for Paraguay in the 6th, Mauricio Serna scored on a subsequent penalty in the 85th and two minutes later Soto made it 2-1 for the home team.

Paraguay improved its record to 6-2-1 with 20 points.

Colombia dropped to 5-2-2 and second place in the standings with 17 points.

The first four of nine teams will qualify for the 1998 World Cup finals in France together with defending champion Brazil.

(AP)

Understanding Kung Fu as Described by a Master

Skills of Kung Fu

(Part 33)



A person who performs hand techniques skillfully can win most of his challenges. If you need much muscular activities, you should apply minimum kinetic energy in order to take its optimal advantage for overcoming your rival. You should know that rotating movements in comparison with the simple ones require more energy because the direction in rotating techniques should be changed very rapidly. When you face a new and strange action, the best reaction is often to increase your motion and activity. While practicing, you should follow a normal and simple rhythm in order to have automatic and light movements. When the muscles can easily be stretched, the movements are more accurate. Right thinking and physical fitness are keys to championship. Meanwhile, you should welcome the hardest exercises. The more ready you are, the more self-confident you will be and vice versa. The challengers can be classified into two groups: First, those who are physically powerful and second those who are mentally powerful. The former group follows the same method in different situations while the latter group changes their tactics according to



the rival's techniques and methods. Their challenges are based on analysis, preliminary assessment, readiness and finally action. Initial evaluation is done at the first contact and includes surveying the opponent's habits, weaknesses and abilities. For instance, you should find out whether your rival adopts offense or defense method. If he is an offensive person, you have to apply tricky movements to make him defend and give up attacking. Readiness is the next step, i.e. after getting familiar with the rival's capabilities you are now aware of his weaknesses and are able to plan for defeating him. If you intend to make an attack on him, you should keep everything under control. You can also confuse him through tricky attacks just before your main offenses. You have to apply a variety of attacks to puzzle your rival so that he cannot predict your next movements. However, you should be alert enough to defend his unexpected hindering blows.

Iran's UN Mission on Distortion of President Rafsanjani's Remarks on American TV

UNITED NATIONS HQ, New York — The Iranian mission at the world body on Thursday night in a letter sent to Mike Wallace of the '60 Minutes' and 'CSPAN' programs drew attention to its mistake claiming that President Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani admitted some sort of responsibility in the killing of Iranian dissidents abroad.

The letter written by Iran's UN office Press Secretary Hossein Nosrat said: "I must tell you about a big misunderstanding that was implied in the 60 Minute and expressed in CSPAN, i.e., the president 'virtually admitted' that Iran has had some involvement in the killing of Iranian dissidents abroad. The president did not intend to and in fact did not leave that impression in Persian language. He specifically rejected that allegation and pointed out that not even a single case has so far been proved."

The letter went on to clarify: "Here is my explanation of why and where you got that impression. In response to your comments about the list of 300 people, you and your viewers heard through the translator: 'These are all claims. Many of them are not true. In some cases they are distorted.' The president here says two or three sentences about Iran suffering from terrorism and about Lebanon, and then goes back to the list and continues: 'The rest of what is said is all lies. So far you have not been able to prove even a single case of your accusation.' I think you must have thought that when President Rafsanjani says that many of the cases of allegations against Iran to have had involvement in killing of dissenters are not true and that is some cases they are distorted, then by deduction he must believe that some are true. I think the misconception lies here which is due to the inherent problem of translation and background.

"What was translated as: 'Many of them are not true', was in fact: 'kheili az anha haqiqat nadarad', meaning 'many of them are not real'. By this the president meant that many names on the list are not real names and are made up. And then he says that 'in some cases they are distorted', meaning that the list portrays some criminals convicted and sentenced as political dissenters. And finally after a few sentences, the president says that the rest of them are lies and in order to support his view he goes on to say that not even a single case of such allegation has thus far been proved.

"Therefore, the president has been questioning the authenticity of cases on your list on the basis of his experience with similar lists previously submitted to Iran by the UN human rights rapporteur.

Please also note that in response to your offer to leave the president the list, he categorically rejected the allegation by saying: 'But, not even one of these cases is related to Iran or the government of Iran. They are all internal fighting between them — things that have nothing to do with us. These are all claims, tell me about the proven case of (Waco)... ', and thus the president tries to put the ball in America's court."

(IRNA)

Four Missing Iranians Alive in Israeli Jails

BEIRUT — Four Iranians kidnapped 15 years ago in Lebanon are still alive and jailed in Israel, an Iranian diplomatic source in Beirut was reported as saying Friday.

"The four hostages are still alive and, according to the available indications and evidence, they are imprisoned by the Zionist entity in occupied Palestine," the source said.

"Iran is following up the file by the necessary ways," it told *Al-Aahd* weekly.

An Israeli human rights activist said Wednesday that the four Iranians, were alive and being held in an Israeli jail.

"I have confirmation from the Israeli side that these four Iranians have been detained in Israeli prisons for at least two years," said Ahmed Habiballah, director of a Nazareth-based Prisoners' Rights Association.

"I know that these are the four men kidnapped in Lebanon," he told AFP.

The four Iranians are Mohsen Mussawi, who was the charge d'affaires at Iran's Embassy in Beirut, diplomat Ahmad Motevasselian, embassy driver Taghi Rastegar-Moghaddam and a photographer for the official Iranian News Agency, Kazem Akhava.

The four were kidnapped on July 4, 1982, at a roadblock manned by the Lebanese forces Militia north of Beirut.

In November 1990, the militia's chief Samir Geagea told relatives of the four that they were killed shortly after their kidnapping.

In November 1994, Iran's Ambassador in Beirut, Hamayun Alizade, said he believed the four were still alive.

Habiballah said lawyers working with his association were drawing up a legal petition to force Israeli authorities to reveal information about the Iranians.

"The Israelis confirmed that they are holding them, but they refuse to say in which prison," he said.

Israel Will Not Ask U.S. to Extradite Hamas Leader

BAIT-UL-MOQADDAS — Citing security concerns, Israel announced Thursday that it will no longer seek the extradition of Mousa Abu Marzook, an Islamic leader jailed in New York.

Israel radio said contacts were under way with Jordan to arrange for Abu Marzook to be sent there instead.

Israel had sought to put Abu Marzook on trial on suspicion he financed and planned attacks against Israelis as a leader of Hamas. Immediately after his arrest in the United States in the summer of 1995, the previous Israeli government requested Abu Marzook's extradition to Israel.

(AP)

(Contd From Pg. 1)

RAFSANJANI'S...

But Saudis are intelligent, Nouri said, adding that the Saudi interior minister has already rejected such an accusation and that Saudi Arabia does not let others to use this event as a political tool to attain their objectives.

"Also the Saudi defense minister has rejected what U.S. has reported against Iran," he said, adding, according to Saudi defense minister investigations on the explosion are underway.

The U.S. has been frustrated in even in this scenario, he said adding Iran had no connection with Al-Dahran explosion.

Following the decisions of Iran and Saudi Arabia to expand mutual ties, Tehran and Riyadh agreed to open a commercial flight between the two countries to expand economic ties, the ambassador said.

He also added that the Muslim country of Saudi Arabia has agreed with the opening of a trade fair by the Islamic Republic of Iran.

Elsewhere, Nouri added that Iran-Saudi relations have entered a new era and the two sides are eager to expand mutual ties. The two sides have also agreed to connect their ports for transportation of goods.

Referring to the recent statement released in Cairo by foreign ministers of the Islamic countries, Hojjatoleslam Nouri said, today Muslims have realized that Iranian stands towards the Zionist regime's aggressive policy are just. The Zionist regime wants to exploit the Islamic countries, he said adding, the Zionist entity is not even inclined to give the Muslims their established rights.

The foreign ministers of the Islamic countries called for freezing all ties with the Zionist regime in Cairo meeting.

(Contd From Pg. 2)

PRESIDENT NEW...

He said that fortunately, the country is self-sufficient in all agricultural related affairs ranging from utilization of the system of irrigation under pressure to seeds cultivation, production of pesticides and manufacture of related machineries.

Today the Iranian markets are full of Iranian made goods and Iran enjoys high status at the international level for enhancement of such infrastructural and mother industries as steel, copper and aluminium processing. It has also established power plants, refineries, tyre, cement and paper mills.

The president said there is much to say about the country's defense although he hopes not to speak about, however, God forbid, if there was any conflict, the Iranian people and the world would find out Iran's real power in this vital field.

He added that highly effective steps have been taken in the area of urban development to the effect that people in Tehran would soon witness the opening of the subway.

Furthermore, he said that programs have been set to uproot poverty and its signs left from the monarchial regime. Switching to the upcoming presidential elections, the president called on the Iranian people to turn out in the elections and determine their destiny.

The president expressed pleasure with the women's status in Iran and said the Iranian women share the country's affairs while observing social values and morals.

(IRNA)

(Contd From Pg. 2)

IRAN-LIBYA...

hran Summit would be able to take big strides towards solving the problems of the world of Islam.

He added that without doubt the presence of heads of Islamic countries at the session will be an appropriate opportunity to discuss issues relating to Islamic solidarity.

Praising the significant role played by the Islamic Republic of Iran in championing the cause of the ummah, the Libyan leader voiced pleasure on promotion of the two countries' friendly relations.

Velayati, said the Islamic states through their fraternal ties should take constructive decisions at the OIC in the interests of the world of Islam.

He appreciated constructive efforts made by the two countries to further strengthen their bilateral cooperation and emphasized on their further expansion.

(IRNA)

(Contd From Pg. 1)

BAGHDAD....

Democratic Party, which are vying for power in Iraqi Kurdistan.

Welch, who negotiated a cease-fire between the two factions in October, left Ankara earlier Thursday to northern Iraq to meet representatives from the two parties to cement the truce and iron out other differences.

The two parties took control of northern Iraq shortly after the end of the 1991 Persian Gulf war under military protection provided by war allies the United States, Britain and France.

Baghdad accuses Washington of pressuring the two parties to stay outside the central government's control as part of what it sees as a conspiracy against President Saddam Hussein's regime.

"The experience of the past years has proved beyond any doubt that the deployment of the so-called Air Surveillance Force in Turkey is but a cover to continue hatching conspiracies against Iraq and threatening its national unity," said the unnamed spokesman quoted by the Iraqi News Agency.

With the help Saddam's army, the Kurdistan Democratic Party drove the Patriotic Union out of parts of northern Iraq in August.

A U.S.-brokered cease-fire signed in October has generally been observed.

(AP)

(Contd From Pg. 1)

ISRAEL...

longing to the Islamic group Hamas, Sayfan said.

One of those turned back was Ahmad Saati, a member of the Islamic National Salvation Party, a political ally of Hamas.

"It's a violation of basic human rights — that of freedom of religious worship," Saati told AFP.

Israel also arrested a Hamas member, Sheikh Hassan Yussef, as he tried to cross from the West Bank into Jordan on his way to Saudi Arabia earlier this week.

Yussef's wife said he was ordered detained for four months without trial in Israel.

(AFP)

(Contd From Pg. 1)

ARAB...

participation in multilateral (peace) negotiations, and the pursuit of the full Arab boycott against Israel until the achievement of a just and comprehensive peace in the region."

The recommendations came in reaction to Israel's pressing ahead with construction of a Jewish settlement in disputed East Bait-ul-Moqaddas.

The Arab League's decision applies to Oman, Morocco, Qatar, Tunisia and Mauritania, which decided since 1991 to open offices and missions in the Jewish state.

Meanwhile Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has issued a veiled threat that the army could intervene in the Palestinian self-rule areas in case of more anti-Israeli attacks, the newspaper *Haaretz* reported Friday.

"Unlike the previous government, we are looking at all the options and all the possibilities of action," he said late Thursday in response to a question over military intervention.

According to *Haaretz*, the army has drawn up several contingency plans to intervene in the territories granted self-rule under the peace accords with the Palestinians.

Netanyahu, addressing his right-wing Likud Party at a meeting in Tel Aviv, also renewed charges that the Palestinian authority of Yasser Arafat has "explicitly given its green light to violence."

"The time for goodwill gestures towards the Palestinians is over. It's up to them to make them," he said.

The prime minister insisted that construction will go on at the new Jewish settlement of Har Homa in annexed East Bait-ul-Moqaddas, a project that has sparked a crisis in the peace process and triggered a wave of violence.

According to another report, Netanyahu said Friday he was prepared for "a new Camp David" to hammer out a final peace settlement with the Palestinians.

Speaking on German ARD television, he said a summit with Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat and U.S. President Bill Clinton could first take place after a halt to violence against Israel.

"As soon as attacks against Israel have ceased," all other outstanding questions could be resolved in six months, he said.

But if that proved impossible in the time span, he could meet Clinton and Arafat in "a sort of new Camp David summit," along the lines of the 1978 negotiations which led to an Israeli-Egyptian peace treaty the following year.

Arafat said Thursday that he was "not against this meeting" with Netanyahu, after a spokesman for the Palestinian leader said that the United States was trying to arrange such a summit.

"But the problem is how to push forward and to prevent all the breachings of the peace process, especially confiscating of lands, building settlements, 'Judaizing' Bait-ul-Moqaddas and many other issues," Arafat added.

"We are against terrorism, definitely," he told journalists, following the wave of violence that has rocked the peace process since Israel started construction of a new Jewish settlement in annexed East Bait-ul-Moqaddas.

Netanyahu insisted on German television that work will continue on the Har Homa settlement.

"We have not occupied an Arab land. These are private Jewish properties which were sold to build homes for Jews," said the right-wing prime minister, who is to meet Clinton in Washington next week.

(AFP)

(Contd From Pg. 1)

FIVE...

Five Palestinians were injured and taken to hospital. Palestinian police then pushed back protesters to prevent them from reaching the Israeli post.

Palestinians have held daily protests since Israel started work on March 18 on a new Jewish settlement in annexed East Bait-ul-Moqaddas.

The project has sparked a crisis in the peace process. (AFP)

(Contd From Pg. 1)

LEADER'S...

eastern Iranian city of Bojnourd (Khorasan Province), and called on people to contribute their help to the survivers of the disasters.

The message wished health, prosperity, happiness and well being for the Iranian nation. *(IRNA)*

(Contd From Pg. 1)

PRESIDENT ...

Rafsanjani's visit will be followed by the visit of his Saudi counterpart King Fahd who will come here for the Tehran OIC summit. If King Fahd's health conditions are not suitable, Prince Abdullah will participate in Tehran OIC summit to be held in December.

The exchange of high-ranking officials between Iran and Saudi Arabia will play a pivotal role in the improvement of bilateral relations. Iran and Saudi Arabia have been rivals in oil export during the past forty years. After the victory of Islamic Revolution bilateral ties grew cold.

However new circumstances created over the past few years have encouraged the two sides to improve bilateral ties.

The president's visit which will be at least a ten-day trip will begin within next ten days if it is to happen during the Hajj ceremonies. President Rafsanjani will perform Hajj rituals and visit Riyadh, Mecca, Medina, and the suburbs.

(Contd From Pg. 10)

U.S. ......

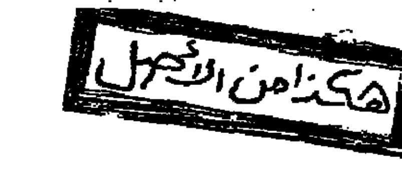
The networks will simultaneously broadcast their programs in the older analog system until 2006, when most Americans are expected have television sets that can accept digital transmissions.

In 2006, the networks will return their analog licenses to the government so they may be auctioned to the public.

Congressional leaders, including former Senate leader Bob Dole, had called for the FCC to auction the digital licenses rather than giving them away.

"Auctioning the digital spectrum could have netted as much as $70 billion, and that would have substantially offset the current budget deficit," said Senator John McCain, chairman of the Senate Commerce Committee.

(AFP)



اهداء من الاهل

President's Interview with CBS TV Station

TEHRAN — In a recent interview with American television network of CBS, Iran's President Hojjatoleslam Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani said that the United States had antagonized the Islamic Republic since the triumph of the Islamic Revolution. He said Washington had repeatedly intimated a desire for talks with Iran but that it never had a bona fide intention to do so.

President Rafsanjani said the first gesture of sincere intention for the United States would be to unfreeze Iranian assets in the U.S. banks which Washington had seized since the rupture in relations between Iran and the United States.

He said Washington's professed desire to mend relations with Iran would be unrealistic without doing something positive in demonstration of that intention.

The following is excerpts from that interview.

QUESTION: Bruce Lingen who was in charge at the embassy when hostages were taken says: For the U.S. and Iran seventeen years of no dialog is too long. The challenge is to find ways to begin talking without pre-conditions, about how over time to reestablish relationship, however limited. It won't be easy. There are formidable obstacles on both sides. But there is ample evidence that the public opinion of both sides is probably more open to change than are the two governments.

ANSWER: The main issue on our side is the mistrust that exists towards the United States. And *other issues of emotional* nature are not of that importance to us. If America could gain our trust, what you are saying could happen.

Q. *How can America gain your* trust?

A. There might be different approaches. However, good intention is one of them since what we have seen is ill intention so far from them. As an approach, for example, I used to mention release of the Iranian assets which are frozen which could be done by the United States. This is an example. .. A gesture of goodwill or good intention would have to be presented prior to resuming relations or *prior to a dialog* between the two countries. ..

We have seen so much mal-intentions so far presented to us that even *requesting* or *asking* for the negotiations would be counted as another negative approach towards us.

Q. You know what the (U.S.) president says: The state of Iran sponsors terrorism. The state of Iran is against the peace process, supports Hezbollah, Hezbollah tries to do great damage to our friend, our ally Israel.

A. These are the claims made by them. There are no realities into them and they occasionally change the interpretation of some cases as well. Iran has suffered from the terrorism more than any other country. All those *who have* been committing terrorist activities in Iran do have their freedom and liberty in the United States. And America is aware of this and even they have assassinated some of the Americans themselves.

Q. Any names?

A. MKO terrorist group... and recently Sweden has announced this group as terrorists. The issue of Hezbollah should not be mixed with terrorism. Hezbollah is defending its country since its country has been occupied by Israel. We do consider Israel as a terrorist, state of terrorism. Don't they come to Lebanon to kidnap the people and take them to jail in Israel? This is a clear evidence of the state-sponsored terrorism. We have never denied this *fact that* whoever defends his country is considered to be right to us and we would support him. And the rest *of the talks are false and lies.*

No single case of all these accusations could have been proved so far.

Q. In France? In Germany?

A. With all those publicity and fanfares that the French made about, they finally acquitted Iran. There were people who were announced as culprits and were condemned and they were the officers working for the French government.

Q. You get in the way of the peace process that is okayed by King Hussein of Jordan, that is okayed by Mubarak and Egypt, that has been okayed by many many Palestinians. You are more Palestinian, sir, than the Palestinians.

A. You have mixed up two different issues. Iran has simply expressed its views and there has been no practical opposition to this trend. We have said that we do not consider this peace process as just. And we have said that this process could not be successful since it has not resolved the problem of the refugees.

And we are on the other side familiar with the conditions inside Israel that the Israelis would not allow the Palestinians even to gain *this much of the advantage in this* process. And to this moment our words and position have been right. Israel has been able to gain *this signature of her legitimacy* by the Arab countries that so far they did not have. And Mr. Netanyahu came to power and simply erased the signature of the previous governments.

Q. Another subject: Tehran looks prosperous. Tehran looks better today than I have seen Tehran looked in a quarter of the century. It is clean, it is green, there is all kinds of building going on. It looks like a prosperous city. Yes? I have not been here for eight years. I was astonished to see the physical condition of the city of Tehran. How come?

A. These eight years that you have been absent, have been those eight years of construction of ours. And we have made lots of spending on the construction of Iran within the past eight years.

And the main expenses that we have done are outside Tehran since Tehran has been run by *revenues* collected from the Tehranis. At the present time, we do have the plans and the construction of 135 dams over our rivers. We have the inauguration of a big dam every other forty days. The refineries, power plants, steel industries and so many other petrochemical industries that are day by day being worked out. Ninety five percent of our villages have been given water, electricity, roads, schools and hospitals.

He referred to high and unbelievable figures of abortion in the United States and said that the government officials should take *care of their youngsters that are* emotional and sentimental particularly.

Asked whether he had any satellite dish and whether he watched its programs, president said that Iranian officials hear and read about satellite programs in reports they receive.

The CBS reporter questioned temporary marriage or *'sigheh'*. The president said, this rampant corruption that has been prevailing in *West has been somehow* controlled in Islam. Considering the basic natural needs of the men and women under the circumstances that the permanent marriage is not possible.

Why not possible? Asked CBS reporter, whose answer was: It is not possible for everybody to have a permanent marriage.

The CBS reporter asked: Since they cannot afford it. They don't have enough money, and followed the response: Occasionally it could be financial or they are traveling. There are women losing their husbands. In general, there are large number of the people in need of reaching out for those basic natural desires in a lawful manner. This could be accomplished through an official agreement or a contract between the two parties.

For one day, or one week, or one month? asked CBS and was *answered: Whatever the period.*

In response to the question: It sounds like legitimizing illicit sexual relations? President said: This brings an order to the relation. The fate of the child would be cleared. The condition of the woman for the period that could not get married for the expenses would be cleared up. From the mental point of view something legal is taking place and not something illicit that *causes fear to everybody.*



Then CBS said, it sounds a compassionate way to let a man, a woman to love each other and cannot marry have such relations.

Okayed by Ayatollah Shirazy. The president said in reply that in the Shi'ite school of thought, everybody accepts it and considers this approach as a solution toward the sexual problems existing.

Sexual problems do exist. It seems unnatural that a young man and a young woman cannot go out on a date, a movie, some tea, a meal without somebody busting them up, said CBS. The president said there is no objection to that.

Elsewhere in the interview, CBS asked president to explain why Iran needed nuclear power despite its having much energy, including gas and oil, and president said the nuclear power and the nuclear technology for power production is quite vital for a country such as Iran and the power plants that Iran is going to complete have been started to be constructed at the time of the Shah.

How come the Americans were endorsing the projects in those *days and now... you are the ones* who are condemned in this matter.

We have spent DM7 billion and if you count the interest in, as well, we would be having some DM20 billion of the investment there. America is saying that we should not complete this project.

Then you say that we should not hate the United Sates government.

Should you be facing such coersive moves from somebody, would you be able to stay friend with? This arrogant gesture drives the revolutionary Iran away from the United States, said the president.

Also asked about his view about relations with the U.S., president said: as I said should there be a positive gesture or good*will presented, why not? The same* need does lay with Japan as well and they are taking their oil away with no problem. We have no problem with the people of the United States but our problem is with the government. They should just simply disassociate themselves with these bullying moves and the coersive or the forceable actions that they are taking.

(IRNA)

RAFSANJANI:

U.S. Hostilities Against Iran Fruitless

ISLAMABAD —Iran's President Ali Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani said the U.S. has reaped no benefit from her hostilities against us.

Though any moment any thing might happen, he added, in a press conference, in Islamabad in response to a question about U.S. threats in Persian Gulf.

Rafsanjani visited Islamabad to attend the extraordinary summit meeting of Organization of Islamic Conference (OIC) held marking golden jubilee of Pakistan's independence.

The Iranian president reiterated Tehran's opposition to U.S. sponsored so-called peace process in Middle East and said there had been chances or revival of violence in the region since the launching of Washington's initiative.

Referring to *intransigence* of Israel towards Palestinians, he said, it is not a matter of surprise as Israel had never been interested in peace.

However, he said the attitude of United States had exposed its real face to the Arab world.

If there is any award for world's top extremist then it should be given to Netanyahu, he observed.

He also expressed concern over inappropriate response of the Muslim world towards the intransigence of *Israel* in the wake of its adamant approach to build Jewish settlement in Jerusalem.

However, he said the minimum impact, of Israel's move was the signs of revolutionary gestures, shown by Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat and Egyptian Foreign Minister Amr Musa.

They have been reciting verses of Jihad instead of those about reconciliation he said about Amr Musa's and Arafat's speeches.

Referring to his talks with Saudi Arabian Crown Prince Abdollah bin Abdul Aziz and other Arab leaders on the margins of OIC summit in Islamabad, Rafsanjani said his meeting helped clear the misunderstandings and doubts between Iran and its Persian Gulf neighbors, to certain extent.

Answering a question about the reports that Tehran expressed reservations over the text of the declaration concerning Palestinian problem at the summit, he said his country was opposed to the part of the declaration, giving any legitimacy to illegitimate Zionist regime.

However, he said Tehran supported the part of resolution calling for holy war against Tel Aviv if Israel backed out from its commitments.

To a question about the rise of sectarian violence in Pakistan, Rafsanjani said his country was concerned over this trend which had also claimed some lives.

He said Tehran denounces all sorts of sectarian-related violence and did not support any group promoting this menace.

On Afghanistan, he said Iran did not provide military assistance to any of the Afghan groups as, we are opposed to war.

However, he said, Tehran had been providing humanitarian assistance to Afghanistan.

He said Iran was not opposed to holding talks with Taliban militia and had invited them to attend the intra-Afghan dialog it hosted. But, he regretted, Taliban did not turn up at the meeting.

Answering a question, Rafsanjani voiced solidarity with the people of Kashmir and urged Muslim world to ask India to give them their due rights.

The Iranian President confirmed that Islamabad accepted Tehran's offer for mediation on Kashmir issue while India did not. However, he said, 'still we are not disappointed for we enjoy good relations with India and hope for a peaceful settlement of the issue.

(IRNA)

Every Day 70 to 80 Afghan Officials Get Fired by Taliban

ISLAMABAD — The Taliban militia in Kabul has sacked about 80 government employees every day from almost all departments, on account of violation of their Islamic codes, says a press report.

An English daily the Muslim based in Islamabad quoting the Afghan sources in Peshawar reported on Friday that firing of the officials on the charges basically related to the way of dressing or the shape of beard has caused great embarrassment among the people.

Many people including women and children have shifted to the suburban areas due to the strict codes introduced by Taliban, the report adds.

Referring to the critical stance of the Iranian religious authorities against the Taliban interpretation of Islam, the paper said Taliban could harm the very reputation of Islam.

The Taliban militia originating basically from the Pakistani seminaries entered Kabul on September 27, 1996.

(IRNA)



Man Killed for Stealing an Orange

COLOMBO — A 24-year-old man was beaten to death in north-western Sri Lanka for stealing an orange worth 10 rupees (17 U.S. cents), police said Friday.

The victim, J.N. Dissanayake, had helped himself to an orange at the Kurunegala Bus Station on Thursday night when he was attacked by the vendor and several others, police said. Three men have been arrested. (AFP)

Florida Man Offers Lease on His Kidney

PORT ORANGE, Fla — Kidneys? Reads the newspaper AD. I have 2 excellent ones long-term lease available.

Bob Loturco, 60, disabled and barely surviving on a 550 a month social security pension, wants to ease his retirement years by leasing for 99 years one of his kidneys to someone in need. Price negotiable.

It's my darn kidney, Loturco said on Wednesday. The former boat builder and car salesman has emphysema and cannot work. But he is not dying, and believes one kidney is enough. (Reuter)

Mobutu Counters Tshisekedi in New Zairean Standoff

KINSHASA — President Mobutu Sese Seko disagreed Friday with new Prime Minister Etienne Tshisekedi over a transitional constitution, underlining their differences only 48 hours after the premier took over.

Mobutu, receiving longtime rival Tshisekedi at the presidential residence at Tshatshi barracks, said he was in favor of the constitution drawn up in 1994.

On Thursday, Tshisekedi rejected that text, saying he supported an alternative one drawn up in 1992 by the National Sovereignty Conference (CNS).

The CNS was never ratified by Mobutu, but the new prime minister insists his government will work on the CNS document and that the CNS itself must replace the current transitional parliament.

"The head of state can only endorse by decree the proposal from the political class designating a prime minister. That is what I did," Mobutu said.

"As for the problems of today, that's not something that concerns the head of state."

Under Zaire's tangled 1994 constitution, the premier must be nominated by the opposition and then approved by the president.

Mobutu also hinted that he may stand again in presidential elections.

"Why not? No one can stop me standing," he replied, when questioned at the end of his meeting with Tshisekedi. (AFP)

Protestors Stage Rally Against Bill to Support U.S. Bases in Okinawa



TOKYO — A crowd of 70 demonstrators staged a rally in central Tokyo on Friday against a government bill which plans to allow U.S. forces to stay on Okinawan land after leases expire in May.

The demonstration came a day after Prime Minister Ryutaro Hashimoto won support from opposition parties to pass the bill revising a special law on the U.S. military use of Japanese soil.

"The revision bill is equal to a denial of the Pacific constitution," said a demonstrator from Okinawa.

Another participant said: "Allowing the revision means we sell Okinawa to the United States again."

Buddhist monks and people from Okinawa beat drums in protest in front of a parliament building.

Representatives of the demonstrators also held talks with officials of major political parties and submitted a resolution against the bill, organizers said.

The law change would allow the U.S. military to continue running 12 Okinawa facilities on land owned by about 3,000 people who have refused to renew leases which expire on May 14.

In Okinawa, Governor Masahide Ota renewed his protest against the bill during talks with Tetsuzo Fuwa, chairman of the Japan Communist Party, Friday morning, officials said.

"We cannot drop our opposition," Ota was quoted as telling Fuwa. "It is questionable to leave suffering on Okinawa merely under the name of the principle of a decision made by the majority." (AFP)

Rioting Prisoners Take Officials Hostage

BOGOTA — A bloody shootout during a prison riot in northern Colombia has left at least three dead, five wounded and a number of prison officials hostage, police said.

The hostage-takers at Valledupar prison, 640 kilometers (400 miles) north of here, were demanding two helicopters and asylum in Cuba for one convict, private Bogota radio net reported.

The armed inmates have put their demands to a committee of Red Cross and government officials, who after a three-hour meeting inside the prison said the situation remained tense, but that the hostages were unharmed, the radio station added.

The inmates told radio net they had no intention of harming their captives, whose number has not been determined, but who include the prison's deputy director Isabel Maya.

Authorities have set up a security cordon around the central prison, which is near a residential neighborhood.

The riot, the sixth in a Colombian prison in the past 10 days, broke out Thursday when a group of prisoners, apparently accused of belonging to a leftist guerrilla group, tried to escape, said Colonel Rafael Pardo, director of the National Penitentiary Institute in Bogota.

According to various unconfirmed accounts, the rioters, estimated at between five and 28 prisoners, overpowered some prison guards and seized their weapons. (AFP)

India's Under-Fire Government Calls Congress Bluff

NEW DELHI — India's ruling coalition on Friday vowed not to make peace with an estranged ally that has vowed to topple the government next week.

Vishwanath Pratap Singh, a leader of the United Front coalition, said the center-left alliance would neither dump Prime Minister H.D. Deve Gowda nor help the former ally, the Congress Party, to form its own government.

Singh, who is admitted in a hospital here, said in a brief statement that the Front believed in "no support to the Congress and no change in United Front leadership."

Singh's statement dashed possible hopes of a compromise with the Congress, which March 30 withdrew its parliamentary support to the coalition, reducing it to a minority.

Singh, a former Congress member, has excellent rapport with Congress President Sitaram Kesri, and it was widely believed he was trying to reach a behind-the-scene deal with the Congress chief.

The Congress, which has been sustaining Deve Gowda for 10 months, has staked claim to form a government of its own with United Front support. The Front has rejected the request. (AFP)

Blair, Major Lock Horns in UK Battle of Trust

LONDON — Prime Minister John Major and Labour Party leader Tony Blair have finally locked horns in a bitter battle to decide who will take Britain into the 21st century.

The phoney war is over in the country's longest election campaign for 80 years. The gloves are off, the party manifestos are out and the insults piling up. For this presidential-style personality contest is all about trust.

The Conservatives say their 18 years in power have transformed Britain into a thriving economy. Labour say they have finally buried their tax and spend image.

After two weeks of sparring, Blair delivered Labour's 10-point contract with the people on Thursday and warned that a fifth election defeat in a row would effectively mean his party never ruling again.

Major, facing an opinion poll gap of up to 24 percentage points according to the latest soundings for the May 1 election, called the manifesto a con-trick and not a contract.

Don't let someone turn back all the improvements we have made over all the years, Major pleaded with voters disillusioned by a Conservative Party rocked by sex and sleaze scandals and shaken by mutinies over Britain's role in Europe. (Reuter)

Texas Executes Man Convicted of 1982 Killings

HUNTSVILLE, Texas — A man convicted in the 1982 torture killings of two teen-agers whose throats were slashed in a botched murder-for hire scheme was executed.

David Spence, 40, was put to death by injection Thursday for the killings of Jill Montgomery, 17, and Kenneth Franks, 18.

Prosecutors said Spence and two accomplices went on a frenzy of rape, torture and knife butchery to kill the two teen-agers and another 17-year-old, Raylene Rice, on July 13, 1982.

Their bodies were found dumped at a park the next day, their throats slashed and bodies pierced with as many as 30 stab wounds.

Bite marks on at least one of the victims were linked to Spence.

A Jordanian immigrant, Muneer Mohammad Deeb, was convicted of hatching the murder-for-hire scheme that led to the kilings. Deeb was sentenced to death but won a retrial and was acquitted in 1993. (AP)

Police in Albania Call For New Recruits, Entire Family Killed Overnight

TIRANA, Albania — The Interior Ministry appealed Friday for more police recruits to help stem rampant crime and wanton violence, illustrated by the overnight killing of an entire family of six.

Seeking cooperation with rebels in the south, Defense Minister Shaqir Vukaj visited the port of Vlora - the center of Albania's month-old unrest. And representatives of a committee of Vlora insurgents traveled to the capital, Tirana, to meet Italian diplomats and assure them any Italian troops dispatched to secure aid deliveries ould be welcome.

Earlier this week, some Vlora insurgent leaders warned Italians to stay away from the port, following the collision of an Italian warship and an Albanian boat that set out from Vlora with dozens of refugees. At least four Albanians drowned, and survivors say up to 80 others are missing.

Meanwhile, European officials were meeting in Rome to firm up plans to send soldiers to Albania in an international aid force.

Albania's caretaker government hopes that an influx of food and other aid, along with the promise of new elections scheduled for June, can help ease the country's unrest.

In the town of Fushe-Kruja, 15 kilometers (9 miles) north of Tirana, an armed gang broke into a house Thursday night and killed Xhevahir Gjoka, 62, his wife Hoke, 56, his two daughters, Etleva, 22, and Elona, 16, his son Kastriot, 27, and his son's wife Luljeta, 22, state radio reported. (AP)

India to Oppose Talks on Kashmir in Non-Aligned Conference

NEW DELHI — India on Friday said it will not hold talks with Pakistan on Kashmir, where 20,000 lives have been claimed, during a ministers' conference of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM).

India, which is hosting the 12th foreign ministerial meeting, said it would not allow Pakistan to use the multi-lateral forum for bilateral talks on the explosive Kashmir issue.

"India strongly believes in resolving its outstanding bilateral issues with Pakistan under the Shimla (peace) agreement," said NAM Conference Secretary-General Savitri Kunadi.

"The forum of NAM will not be permitted for raking up of bilateral issues," she told reporters ahead of Monday's opening of the two-day conference, to be attended by ministers from 70 countries.

Indian Foreign Minister Inder Kumar Gujral and his Pakistani counterpart Gohar Ayub Khan will meet in New Delhi at the end of the conference for discussions.

Indian and Pakistan resumed bilateral talks last month after more than three years in a bid to cool mutual animosity marked by three wars between them since the independence of the subcontinent in 1947. (AFP)

Yemen Court Upholds School Murderer Death Sentence

SAN'A — Yemen's Supreme Court on Thursday approved the death sentence against a man who shot dead four school children and two teachers but overturned a lower court's ruling that his body should be nailed on a cross.

The Supreme Court approved execution by firing squad but decided that the crucifixion should not take place, an official source told Reuters.

A Yemeni appeals court on Wednesday ruled that the man, Mohammad Ahmad Misleh, 48, should be executed by firing squad and his body nailed on a cross for three days near the site where he carried out the killings.

Misleh opened fire with an assault rifle on hundreds of children lined up in the yards of the Adjacent schools before morning classes on Sunday.

His claim that the shooting spree was an attempt to avenge the alleged rape of his daughter and the kidnappings of his daughter and son were rejected by the appeals court.

He killed a headmistress, a teacher and four children. Eleven children were injured, four seriously. (Reuter)

Euro Stocks Retreat After Dow Falls Again

LONDON — European shares slipped on Thursday morning after Wall Street suffered another big loss on fears of higher interest rates but pared sharp early declines by midsession.

The Dow Jones average of leading U.S. shares slid 94 points to 6,517.01 on Wednesday.

But trade was thin and nervous ahead of Friday's crucial U.S. *non-farm* payrolls figures which could signal if and when rates will rise again to counter the threat of inflation in the world's biggest economy.

Higher U.S. rates could undermine Wall Street, which has shed some *400* points since the U.S. federal reserve nudged rates higher last week.

If Wall Street slides further, this would be bad news for other leading bourses, despite recent talk that they might be going their own way, moving independently from Wall Street.

No one wants to be heroic ahead of the (U.S. jobs) data, a share trader in London said.

London's FTSE 100 index of blue-chip shares was down 13.9 points, or 0.3 percent, at 4,222.7 by 1100 GMT, while in Paris the CAC 40 index was down 13.15 points, or 0.5 percent, at 2,517.13.

Germany's Dax index, which closed floor trade before Wall Street opened on Wednesday, was *down 90.34 points, or 2.7 percent,* although most of the losses reflected the index factoring in the U.S. falls.

Nerves in Frankfurt, which has been under greater pressure than other European bourses, remained on edge after the fresh drop on Wall Street. Investors braced *themselves to see what the afternoon* would bring.

It's just nerves, nerves and more nerves here, said a Frankfurt trader. There is no hope of us decoupling from the U.S.

Dealers said that while German shares should not be tracking the U.S. market on the basis of economic *fundamentals*, the psychological impact of Wall Street's decline was immense.

It's clear we are at a different stage here in the economic cycle — no one is talking about a German rate hike today. But it still all depends on Wall Street, a dealer said.

The Bundesbank's policy-making council met but left interest rates unchanged, as economists *had expected.*

In London, domestic British political concerns were thrust back into the spotlight with the release of the opposition Labour Party's manifesto, though it sprang no nasty surprises, dealers said.

Labour is well ahead in the opinion polls and widely expected to form the next government after the May 1 general election. The ruling conservatives launched their manifesto on Wednesday.

Everyone's sitting around waiting for things to happen and it's all going to happen in the states *tomorrow — that's really what the* market's waiting for, one trader said.

Analysts said a strong March payrolls number would boost expectations of further U.S. interest rate hikes.

Most of the recent U.S. economic figures have been showing a very *strong economy*, which might necessitate another early move on interest-rates, another trader said.

French stocks were pressured by Wall Street's fall, while Renault shares weakened after unions in France, Belgium and Spain called *for work stoppages on* Friday.

Elsewhere, Italian, Dutch, and Spanish shares were down by 0.7, 0.6 and 0.5 percent, respectively, though Swedish shares were up a touch.

The dollar was hovering around session lows against the mark at midday in Europe and just below 123 yen in choppy dealings, looking for new direction ahead of the U.S. jobs data on Friday, said analysts.

Trading is very confused, Abn Amro treasury economist Tony Norfield said. The market is looking for a new trend at the beginning of Q2 (the second quarter), he added.

Analysts said dollar trading was nervous ahead of U.S Treasury Secretary Robert Rubin's visit to Japan on Friday.

His comments earlier this week on Japan's trade surplus with the United States, which rose in February for the first time in two years, knocked the dollar to a low of 121.35 yen and re-focused attention on the gap.

(Reuter)

Germany Ignores Strong Data, Leaves Rates Unchanged

FRANKFURT — The Bundesbank left key German interest rates unchanged on Thursday after its fortnightly council meeting, taking no notice of unexpectedly strong economic data signalling an acceleration of economic growth.

As expected, the Central Bank said Germany's key discount rate would remain at 2.50 percent with the lombard rate staying at 4.50 percent and the main money market, or repo, fixed at three percent for another two weeks.

Calm on the currency markets meant the Bundesbank had no need to defend the mark by echoing last week's rise in U.S. Interest rates, while the stronger output data left it with no need to lower rates to spur the economy, economists said.

Industrial output rose 1.9 percent in February after a 1.5 percent decline the month before, but orders showed a smaller 0.2 percent rise, the Economics Ministry said.

Further monetary stimulus from the Bundesbank seems not to be needed, *wrote UBS economists* Ralf Kugelstadt and Holger Fahrinkrug in a research note. We expect the Bundesbank to leave rates on hold for a considerable time.

Uwe Angenendt, economist at BHF Bank in Frankfurt, said: The recovery is still far too fragile and it will take quite a while for such a recovery to filter through and prompt a change in Bundesbank policies.

Taking the broad view, State Secretary for Finance Juergen Stark said conditions for low interest *rates in Europe remained* favorable despite the rise in U.S. interest rates.

European interest rate developments had been decoupled from the United States for some time, he said.

Nonetheless jitters about a possible German interest rate Hike remained, reflected in relatively firm money market rates.

While economists said the Bundesbank had no reason to follow the fed move, *dealers called the* nervousness palpable.

At times of uncertainty about the direction of interest rates, short-term rates often go up, said a senior money market trader, adding: Only after expectations normalize a bit again, will be see rates coming off again.

Call money rates traded between 3.125/3.150 percent, virtually unchanged from Wednesday's levels, when the Bundesbank also drained funds from the market.

(Reuter)

February Crude Oil Imports Up 3.7 percent

TOKYO — Japan's crude oil imports rose 3.7 percent in February over a year earlier to 146.05 million barrels for the fourth consecutive monthly rise, the Ministry of International Trade and Industry (MITI) said.

Imports from the Middle East totaled 121.52 million barrels, up 8.9 percent, accounting for 83.2 percent of overall oil imports, compared to *84.5* percent in January, the ministry said in a preliminary report.

The United Arab Emirates topped the list of crude oil suppliers at 35.79 million barrels, up 3.8 percent, followed by Saudi Arabia at 29.63 million barrels, up 8.3 percent, and Iran at 20.88 million barrels, up *29.0* percent, MITI said.

February's imports also included 1.82 million barrels from Iraq, the first oil imports from that nation in six years and six months, it said.

The Iraqi oil imports came after the UN last December partially *lifted the oil* export ban *imposed* on Iraq as a sanction for its invasion of Kuwait in 1990.

(IRNA)

China Finds an Extra 10 Million Tons of Grain in 1996

BEIJING — China announced Friday a 10 million-ton addition to its crucial 1996 grain harvest figure, saying the damage brought by last year's floods and droughts had been less than feared.

The figure released by the State Statistical Bureau (SSB) put total grain output for last year at 490 million tons, compared to the previous official tally of 480 million tons.

"In making the *original* estimate, people had over-stated the effect of last year's disasters," SSB Director General Zhang Sai said.

Zhang also pointed out that accurate grain figures were hard to come by in China, given the sheer size of the country and the different number of harvests brought in in different parts of the country.

"Even the figure released today is preliminary and could change, although not to any marked degree," he added.

China attaches enormous political significance to its ability to feed its ever-increasing population, amid *international* concern that its import requirements by the year 2030 could cause havoc with the gloabl grain market. *(AFP)*

Dollar Rises Following U.S. Official Remarks, Stocks Fall Moderately

TOKYO — U.S. Treasury Secretary Robert Rubin's remark that foreign exchange policy should not be used to fix trade imbalances helped push the dollar higher against the yen in Friday morning trading. Tokyo stock prices fell moderately.

"We don't believe in anybody using their currency for trade policy," *Rubin told the reporters* who accompanied him from the United States to Japan. "Us or anybody else."

"Interbank dealers had hoped for these comments," said Shuichi Noji, a dealer at Hokkaido Takushoku Bank.

Rubin reiterated that Japan must *fulfill* its promise to open its markets through deregulation and expand domestic demand.

Short-term players initially capitalized on his remarks by buying dollars at the day's low levels, then selling them off after the currency hit its intraday high, traders said.

Traders said *that* U.S. securities companies were also big buyers of the dollar following Rubin's latest comments.

The dollar's strength against the yen in recent months has been contributing to a wider Japanese trade surplus with the United States because it tends to make U.S. *exports more expensive* in Japan and Japanese products cheaper abroad.

At late morning, the dollar was changing hands at 122.94 yen, up 0.18 yen from its late Thursday in Tokyo and also higher than its late New York level of 122.65 yen overnight. It ranged between 122.45 yen and 123.10 yen during Friday's morning trading.

Rubin was in tokyo as part of a three-nation asian tour, which will also take him to the Philippines and Vietnam.

On the stock market, stocks started sharply lower following a 39.66-point fall in the Dow Jones industrial average Thursday.

Traders said many investors are holding back prior to a news conference by Rubin, scheduled later in the day *at the* U.S. embassy, and the release of the u. S. Employment data for March, due out in Washington later Friday.

The Benchmark Nikkei stock average of 225 selected issues lost 135.51 points, or 0.75 percent, to *17,993. 80 points at the end of the* morning session. On Thursday, the average gained 92.10 points, or 0.51 percent.

Morning losers included construction issues, paper-pulp and brokerage stocks. Gainers included high technology issues and some steels.

The Tokyo stock price index of all issues listed on the first section was down 5.68 points, or 0.41 percent, to 1,375.02. The topix had closed up 5.10 points, or 0.37 percent, the day before.

The Benchmark No.182 10-year Japanese government bond was sold at 106.06 yen, up from *Thursday's finish of 105.88 yen.* Its yield, which moves in the opposite direction, stood at 2.150 percent, down from 2.175 percent.

(AP)

Kuwait Projects '97/98 Budget Deficit Fall

KUWAIT — Kuwait's proposed *1997/98 (July-June) budget shows* a deficit fall to 1.139 billion dinars ($3.76 billion) from a 1.21 billion gap in the current fiscal year, figures published on Thursday show.

The figures show a rise in state expenditure to 4.339 billion dinars from 4.210 billion in the previous year, the preliminary figures ran by Al-Qabas newspaper showed.

State revenue was projected at 3.200 billion *dinars* compared *to* 3.000 billion. Revenue from oil was put at 2.555 billion dinars compared to 2.56 billion in the current fiscal year.

The figures were obtained from a report discussed by the Persian Gulf state's supreme planning council, Qabas said.

The projected deficit stands at about 13 percent of an estimated 1996 Gross Domestic Product (GDP) of around 8.6 billion dinars by current prices.

The state budget, which does not include revenue from foreign investments, needs to be approved by Parliament and the Emir Sheikh Jaber al-Ahmad al-Sabah.

National Bank of Kuwait NBKK. KW, the Persian Gulf state's largest commercial Bank, has said it expects the actual 1996/97 deficit to be almost halved due to higher than expected oil prices.

Kuwait, which uses a conservative 13 per barrel crude price estimate in revenue projections, has halved the projected deficit for the *1995/96* budget mainly due to oil prices rise.

OPEC member Kuwait produces around 2.0 million barrels per day of crude, which earns the *desert state* about 90 percent of its total revenue.

Officials have said they plan to eliminate the deficit by the year 2000, a target that economists say would be hard to achieve without serious reforms that have not been introduced.

(Reuter)

Philippine Inflation Rate Rises to 4.8 Percent in March

MANILA — The Philippines' inflation rate rose to 4.8 percent in March from 4.4 percent a month earlier, *the National Statistics* Office (NSO) said Friday.

The NSO noted that prices of most products in all commodity groups *which* comprise the index had risen in March.

But the rise would still allow the Philippines to meet its year-end target inflation rate of six to seven percent in 1997, finance of*ficials and analysts said.*

"the impressive performance of consumer prices came about with the sustained restraint on monetary growth," Central Bank Governor Gabriel Singson said in a statement.

He cited base money and reserve money levels were "*substantially* below program ceilings," hitting 10 billion pesos ($384.6 million) in March.

Domestic liquidity dropped to 14.3 percent in January from 15.8 percent in the previous month, Singson added.

Analysts said the March *monthly figure* was beyond their expectations.

"It was a tempered increase and this makes the full year government target of 6.5 percent inflation rate highly achievable," said Citisecurities Inc. research head Cillete Liboro.

The 4.8 inflation rate in March is lower than the 11.8 percent posted in the same period a year ago. *(AFP)*

India Truck Strike Seen Threatening Entire Economy

BOMBAY — An indefinite truck strike has badly affected India's exports and is threatening to paralyze the entire economy, business leaders said on Thursday.

Movement of export goods has already come to a halt. If the strike is allowed to continue, the entire economy will be paralyzed, said Ramu Deora, president of the Federation of Indian Exports Organizations.

Owners of an estimated *2.2* million trucks pulled their vehicles off the roads across the country on Tuesday.

They demanded the withdrawal of the government's five percent service tax on road transport proposed in the federal budget for the 1997/98 (April-March) fiscal year and a decision by *state-owned* insurance firms to boost insurance premiums sharply.

Truckers move about 60 percent of India's goods.

Deora, who is also a trustee on the Bombay Port Trust, said several *vessels had* been diverted to nearby ports such as Colombo, Karachi *or* Dubai *to discharge* cargo. *(Reuter)*

Army Reform Clouds Outlook for Swiss Bicycle Units

ROMONT, Switzerland — Traditionalists cringed when the Swiss army got rid of the cavalry two decades ago. They sighed when it decommissioned its flock of carrier pigeons. But the cruellest blow might be yet to come.

The Swiss army bicycle troops, riding on more than a century of tradition, are facing increasing scrutiny as a throwback to an earlier day that may no longer have much relevance for an army trying to scale down and modernize after the Cold War.

The very thought is anathema to thousands of Swiss bicycle troops past and present, whose Esprit de Corps is rivalled only by elite Swiss fighter jet pilots.

The very thought is anathema to thousands of Swiss bicycle troops past and present, whose Esprit de Corps is rivalled only by elite Swiss fighter jet pilots.

"The Swiss army without bicycle troops is no army," said bicycle rider Thomas Klarnetas, a 20-year-old soldier from Berne who takes fierce pride in his two-wheeled unit.

The Swiss army is the only one in the world that still uses bicycle-mounted units as an integral part of its combat forces.

Others may scoff at the idea of Swiss soldiers riding into the fray on their 'metal mules' in an age of nuclear weapons, but the Swiss don't see the joke.

Alain Grandjean of Berne acknowledged soldiers from other armies laugh at the bicycle troopers who can operate in the broad plain from Lake Geneva to Lake Constance.

"They do, but if we fight them they won't be laughing," he said during an exercise in the rolling hills of western Switzerland.

He and the other roughly 3,000 bicycle troops volunteer to serve in the units that can take their pick of candidates under Switzerland's system of compulsory military service for able-bodied men.

Bike soldiers must do well in the national physical fitness tests taken by Swiss teenagers, and are often accomplished athletes in their own right.

"It is the only troop like this in the world. I like sports and I like the people," Grandjean said of his reasons to join.

"It is a small troop, but it has great qualities," said Major Jean-Pierre Leuenberger, commandant of the training school near Romont where the cyclists go through their paces.

Feeling the Pressure of Modernizing

But the bike troops are feeling the pressure of the Swiss army's ravamping. The army reduced its manpower by a third to 400,000 men when the Cold War ended, cutting six bike companies to the current 21 and just one training school.

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News that it would start training regular infantry at the school has made bicycle troops worried. But the officer in charge of training said their fears were groundless.

"For us it is absolutely sure that they will be preserved," Divisional Commander Claude Weber told Reuters, although he added the ultimate decision was not in his hands.

Bicycle troops are still able to take their pick of Swiss men coming into the armed forces, commanders boast.

"The interest is still great because young people are mostly athletic and bicycling is a trend at the moment," Leuenberger said.

"As long as we get concrete responsibilities, our existence is not in danger," added Staff Adjutant Peter Brunner, whose heavily muscled legs give testimony to his role as the army's senior bicycle trainer.

Recruits go through gruelling training, riding up to 200 km (120 miles) a day on hard-frame military bikes that can carry bazookas, mortars, machine guns or other heavy tools of war.

In 1994, modern bicycles replaced older models that had served with distinction for 90 years with only slight changes. The new models have seven gears and hydraulic brakes but the same old-style saddles which are more comfortable than new ones.

They can reach 90 km (55 miles) an hour on downhill stretches that test riders' ability to keep them stable.

Bicycle companies take pride in using leg muscle to cover long distances that ordinary infantry could never match.

On their recent 200 km ride, recruits pedalled through snow in the morning, powered over mountain passes then rode into a nasty headwind at the end.

"It was fun," remembered 20-year-old Bruno Hagmann of Zurich, a big-boned recruit who hauls a heavy machine gun on the back of his bike and pokes fun at his mates toting lighter loads.

"They have it here," countered Klarnetas, pointing to his bicep, "but not here," he added, pointing to his head.

The soldiers' morale remains high, but debate about their exact military role has caused confusion at times.

Concepts about deploying bicycle units diverged widely in the past. As a result, there was by necessity a splintering of training subjects that led to an irresponsible loss of standards, bicycle regiment commanders reported last year. The cyclists did everything and mastered nothing well.

But now Swiss military doctrine is clear, boosting bicycle units' hopes that they will survive inevitable efforts to cut back the size of the army even further in the absence of a clearly defined security threat.

They are hard to detect, hard to attack and enjoy great sympathy from the population thanks to their performance and environmental friendliness, an army brochure notes.

Their primary responsibility is creating favorable conditions for deploying armored brigades by protecting the flanks, holding open key corridors and guarding open territory.

Bicycle troops' strengths include fighting effectively on short notice, surprising the enemy with their flexibility and mobility, and moving quickly over broad areas. They are considered faster to deploy over 40 km (25 miles) than any other units.

They are hard to detect, hard to attack and enjoy great sympathy from the population thanks to their performance and environmental friendliness, an army brochure notes.

(Reuter)

Eiffel Tower to Show Countdown to Millennium

PARIS — For 1,000 days from midnight on Saturday the Eiffel Tower will be the center piece of France's countdown to the start of the new millennium on January 1, 2000.

The mayor of Paris, Jean Tiberi, will press a button to start the countdown which will be seen slipping away day by day on a huge 33 meter by 12 meter (109 by 39 feet) screen on the tower's second floor.

The Eiffel Tower, the tallest building in Paris and the most visited monument in the world with five million visitors a year, is normally illuminated at night but will remain unlit throughout Saturday until two minutes before zero hour.

The 1,342 computer-controlled light bulbs comprising the clock will then gradually come on and 12 flares will mark the 12 chimes of midnight. The tower will remain illuminated until dawn on Sunday.

Each evening at midnight, the number of days lasting to 2000 will be changed.

The project costs 6 million francs ($1.2 million).

The Eiffel Tower is also to mark the millennium with a site on the Internet which will register celebrations planned the world over. It will be accessible from midnight on Saturday.

(AFP)

India Supreme Court Creaking Under Backlog

NEW DELHI — India's Chief Justice A.N. Ahmadi looks tired when he talks about his job — he heads what is believed to be the world's most overworked supreme court.

"The burden of work in this court is perhaps the maximum anywhere in the world. There are really very few courts where comparable pressure of work on judges can be found," Ahmadi told Reuters recently, shaking his head.

"The burden of work in this court is perhaps the maximum anywhere in the world. There are really very few courts where comparable pressure of work on judges can be found."

With a backlog of nearly 23,000 cases to clear and some 50,000 fresh cases to sift through every year, legal experts say Ahmadi is probably right.

The ultimate arbiter for 936 million Indians demanding justice, the Supreme Court stands at the pinnacle of a network of courts that is wrestling with some 35 million pending cases.

Ahmadi says the Supreme Court handles up to 100 cases every day. The U.S. Supreme Court takes about 150 cases in a year, he says.

Supreme Court Itself Party to Blame

Law Ministry officials say cases lodged with the 25-judge Supreme Court can take as long as 14 years to come up for hearing.

"Part of the blame is to be attributed to the Supreme Court itself," says Soli Sorabjee, a prominent lawyer and former attorney-general.

It entertains many matters in its special leave jurisdiction which should not be touched at all and left at the High Court stage.

When petitioners lose cases at any of India's 18 High Courts, they have no right of appeal, but can plead with the Supreme Court to consider their cases. The court can then admit cases it considers important.

"There is no consistent, coherent thinking of policy among the Supreme Court judges," Sorabjee said. "If Bench A is strict in admission, Bench B will be very liberal. So the litigant decides to take a chance, and it becomes a lottery."

Court Weighed Down by Public Interest Litigation

Legal experts say the court is also weighed down by a spate of public interest litigation (PIL), often filed by social and environmental activists who say the government is not fulfilling its statutory duties.

Judges, known for sententious rulings that usually run into dozens of pages, have grumbled about the petitions.

"An officious busybody picking up a stray dispute or idle pedlar of blackmail litigation, through abuse of the process of court, cannot be permitted to pollute the court instrumentality for private objectives," one judge said in a ruling.

To stem the stream of PILs swamping the Supreme Court, the government recently proposed a law that says petitioners must deposit 100,000 rupees ($2,800) along with their pleas.

Social activist H.D. Shourie, who heads a leading Delhi-based consumer rights group, said politicians hoped that the proposed law would shield them from the judiciary.

Last year a PIL unearthed a political corruption scandal that forced the resignation of seven ministers and helped to send the government hurtling to defeat in general elections.

"By proposing a legislation to curb PIL, politicians are trying to cut at the very roots of the judiciary," Shourie said.

"People in general today are greatly aggrieved. They cannot secure redress from the political or the bureaucratic executive. They are therefore forced to turn to the courts."

Law Ministry officials said the government also plans to introduce a bill that would give politicians the power to appoint judges.

"People in general today are greatly aggrieved," Shourie said. "They cannot secure redress from the political or the bureaucratic executive. They are therefore forced to turn to the courts."

Computerization, Case Classification Help Cut Workload

Ahmadi says he has worked hard to overhaul the Supreme Court's creaking infrastructure since he took charge in 1994, when he inherited a backlog of more than 100,000 cases.

Apart from computerizing the court's filing, he started a system through which similar matters were grouped together and disposed of in bunches, rather than being heard individually by separate benches.

"We will be able to dispose of cases in a year's time if the ship is kept on even keel. The culture of computerization has the capacity to revolutionize," Ahmadi said.

Sorabjee and Ahmadi say each Supreme Court judge spends weekends reading nearly 100 cases ahead of rulings on Monday.

But the job also comes with enviable perquisites — a four-and-a-half-hour working day five days a week, and a two-month summer vacation.

(Reuter)

Suicide Cybercult Liked the Good Life

LOS ANGELES — The 39 members of the Heaven's Gate cult who committed mass suicide gambled in Las Vegas and visited Mexico and a host of tourist haunts, according to media reports Thursday.

The cult took a bus trip through northern California and southern Oregon, and had fun at Sea World and San Diego's Wild Animal Park, before its deadly decision to die in the hope of rebirth on a spaceship members believed was trailing the comet Hale-Bopp.

Known as careful with their cash, the cult members in Las Vegas opted to enjoy inexpensive buffets rather than pricey restaurants, and won at least $20 at slot machines.

According to reports in the *Times* and the *San Diego Union-Tribune*, cult members spent plenty of time watching television and movies on video.

They also meticulously kept track of all expenses in an accounts book. On a trip last February to Las Vegas, sect members took $1,900 to gamble and $3,500 for expenses.

One member found a $20 bill, the *Times* said, and "dutifully turned it over to the communal treasury."

On the eve of committing suicide, cult members apparently continued a normal life.

Cult members paid their rent on time and paid an overdue fine of $2.50 to the local library. Several members even went to clean their teeth.

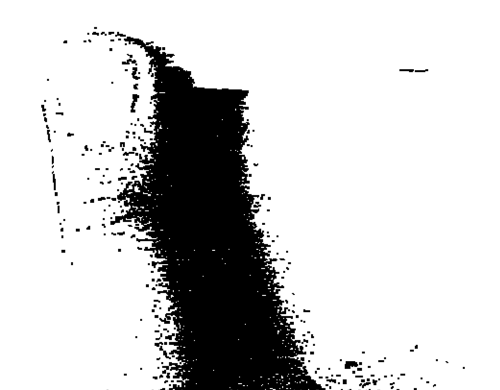
At home, TV seemed to be a favorite distraction. Every member had an assigned seat in front of the largest of six television sets found at the residence, but they could only watch previously approved programs.

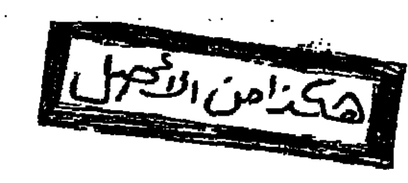
On one given week, according to a guide of approved shows, cult members saw the movies "Chain Reaction", with actor Keanu Reeves, "The Frighteners" with Michael Fox, and "Eddie" with Whoopie Goldberg along with a documentary on the life of Thomas Jefferson.

For unexplained reasons they were not allowed to see the latest James Bond movie, "Goldeneye," or "The Island of Dr. Moreau", with Marlon Brando, or "Multiplicity" with Michael Keaton.

A documentary on the U.S. space program had been approved, though a note on the guide stated the show "might prove to be a few laughs. This is the official version of NASA's Apollo moon mission."

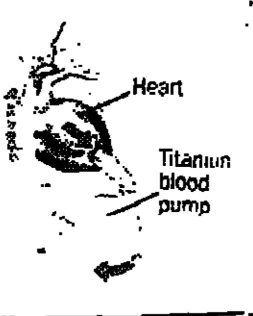
(AFP)





اهداء من الأهرام






THOUGHT

Never fear shadows. They simply mean there's a light shining somewhere nearby.

Ruth E. Renkel

PRAYER

Noon 13:07
Evening 07:47
Dawn (tomorrow) 05:13
Sunrise (tomorrow) 06:44

TODAY IN HISTORY

1939 - All German children between ages of 10 and 13 are ordered to serve in Hitler Youth Organization.

1951 - Julius and Ethel Rosenberg of New York City are sentenced to death as atomic spies for Soviet Union.

1958 - Fidel Castro begins "total war" against Batista government in Cuba.

1969 - Four-man British expedition reaches North Pole after 14-month, 1,300-mile (2,100 km) trek by dog sled.

1971 - Pakistan airlifts foreigners from east Pakistan as fighting rages during a revolt.

1988 - Arabic-speaking hijackers commandeer Kuwaiti Airways plane with 112 people aboard and force it to land in Iran.

1989 - Vietnam announces it will withdraw all its troops from Cambodia by September 30 to encourage political settlement of the 10-year-old conflict.

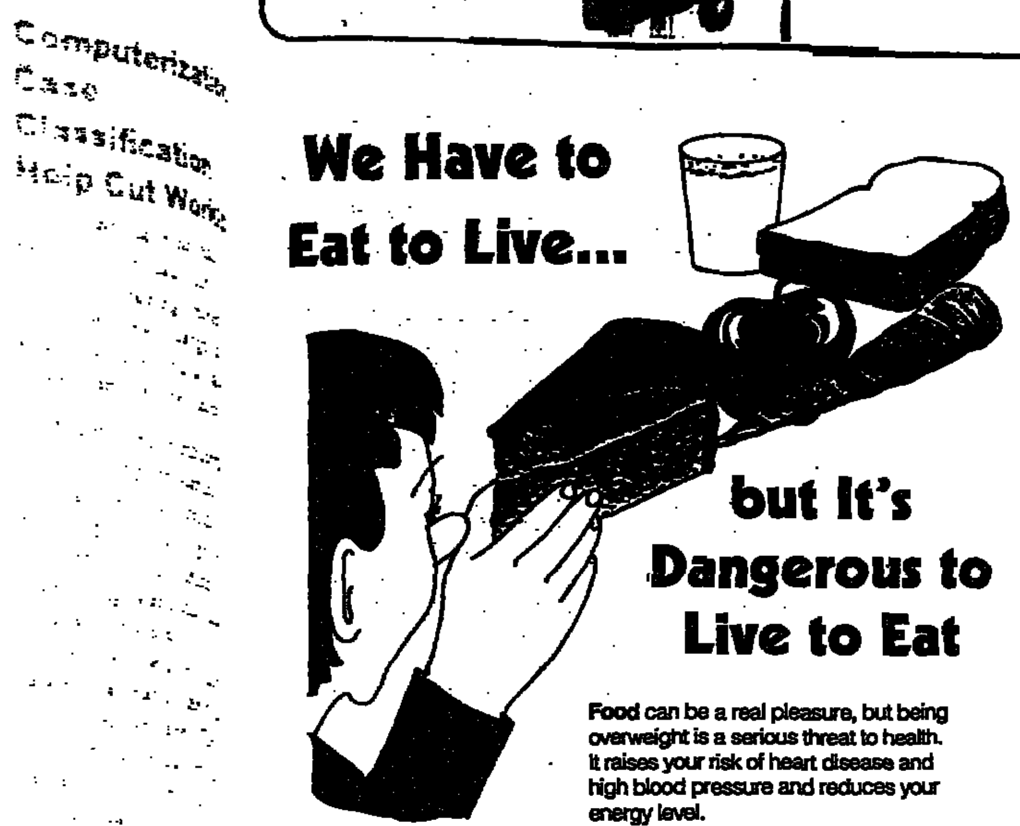
1990 - Soviet Foreign Minister Eduard Shevardnadze, in talks with U.S. Secretary of State Baker, edges away from demand that unified Germany be neutral.

1991 - Iraq's ambassador to the UN says his government will accept a UN fact-finding team to investigate the plight of the Kurds.

1992 - Peru's President Alberto Fujimori suspends constitution and congress.

1993 - Boris Yeltsin returns to Russia, to begin using the Vancouver summit to bolster his political image before a referendum on his leadership.

We Have to Eat to Live... but It's Dangerous to Live to Eat



Food can be a real pleasure, but being overweight is a serious threat to health. It raises your risk of heart disease and high blood pressure and reduces your energy level.

And it's not just **HOW MUCH**, but **WHAT** you eat. Saturated fats, cholesterol, salt, and sugar add weight, not nutrients. The best way to lose weight and keep it off is to gradually change your eating habits—what, why, and when you eat.



Consult your doctor before starting a weight loss program.

Eating Sensibly Will Make You Feel Better

Keep these tips in mind:

DO:

- Substitute lean meats fish poultry, and skim milk products for fatty beef, whole milk, fats, and sugars.
- Eat high fiber foods-fesh fruit and vegetables, whole bread and nuts.
- Reduce snacking.
- Keep raw fruits and vegetables around for snaks and leave the chips and dips at the store.
- Eat smaller portions.
- Eat early in the day so you'll have time to burn it off.
- Think about situations that "make" you eat and try to avoid them.

Don't:

- Don't eat salty foods.
- Don't eat because you're tense or upset.
- Don't eat before going to bed.
- Don't salt your food before you taste it.
- Don't skip breakfast.
- Don't use food as a reward.

Study: Declines in Mental Faculties Not Detected Soon Enough

WASHINGTON — The early characteristics of dementia are often unrecognized by family members, which sometimes mean the elderly go without potential treatment, according to a study published of elderly Japanese-American men in the *Journal of the American Medical Association.*

About 52 percent of family members close to patients suffering from mild dementia, which includes a loss of memory, do not know they are sick, according to the study.

This is also the case for 13 percent of family members even when the elderly have severe dementia, the study said.

The main researcher behind the study, Webster Ross of the University of Hawaii, said the situation was regrettable because in some cases the early signs of dementia are treatable.

Ross based his study on a survey of 191 men, Americans of Japanese descent, aged between 71 and 93 and living in Hawaii.

(AFP)

Study Finds Powder Leads to Increased Cancer Risk

SEATTLE — Researchers have found that women who use powder in their genital area face up to a 50 percent increase in the risk of ovarian cancer.

The study, published in the *American Journal of Epidemiology*, confirmed similar results of other studies and was the first to look at the relationship between the use of genital deodorant spray and ovarian cancer risk.

The study, done from 1986 to 1989 by a team from the Fred Hutchinson Cancer Research Center in Seattle, Washington, considered 834 women in the Puget sound region ranging in age from 20 to 79.

The women included 313 who had been diagnosed with ovarian tumors, while the remainder were randomly selected and had no history of ovarian cancer.

Investigators interviewed the women about whether they stored birth-control diaphragms in powder, dusted perineal areas with powder after bathing, powdered sanitary napkins or used genital deodorant sprays.

The highest increase for risk of ovarian cancer was found in women who dust with powder after bathing, although there was no clear pattern of increasing risk with longer durations of use, said Linda Cook, the epidemiologist who led the study.

However, the elevation in risk associated with the use of genital deodorant spray was highest among women who used the sprays for longer periods of time, she said.

Investigators did not see any increase in risk for developing an ovarian tumor associated with the storing of diaphragms in powder or powdering of sanitary napkins.

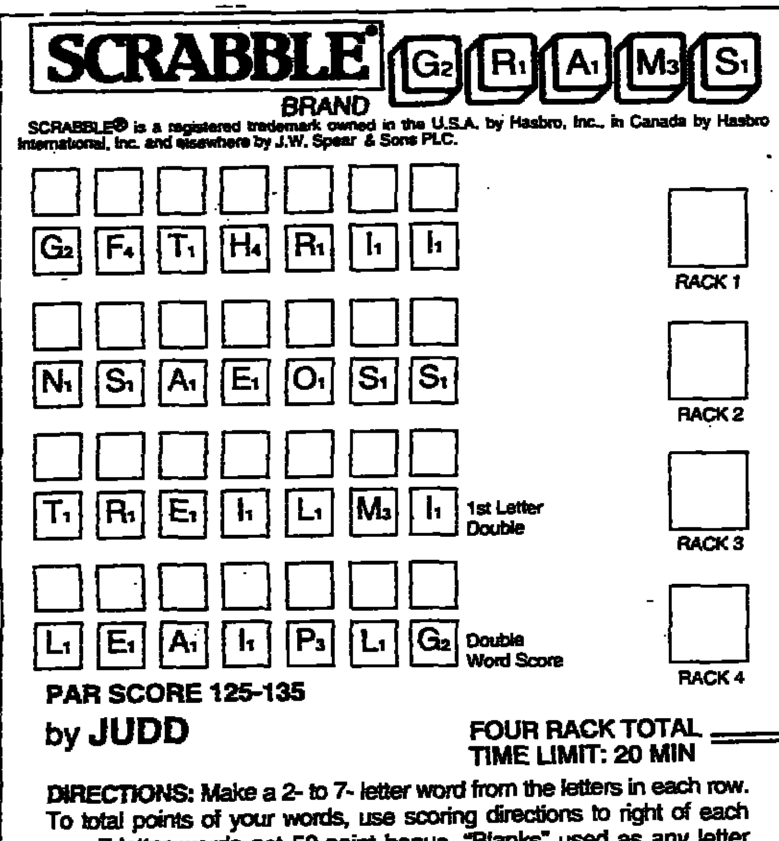
Researchers assessed the overall increase in risk at 50 percent after analysing results of the study and adjusting for age of the subjects, but Cook said it was too early to make any public health recommendations to women.

We don't really know what is the constituent in the products that can actually impact the development of ovarian cancer, she said. We need more research before we can determine a causal relationship.

She also pointed out that ovarian cancer was extremely rare, on the order of 16 new cases annually per 100,000 women in the study region, meaning that a 50 percent increase in risk might translate to only a few additional cases.

Cook also said it was possible that the women with ovarian cancer were more likely to have reported exposure to genital powders, but she said she did not think that was likely because the study showed an increased risk for only two of the four types of powder studied.

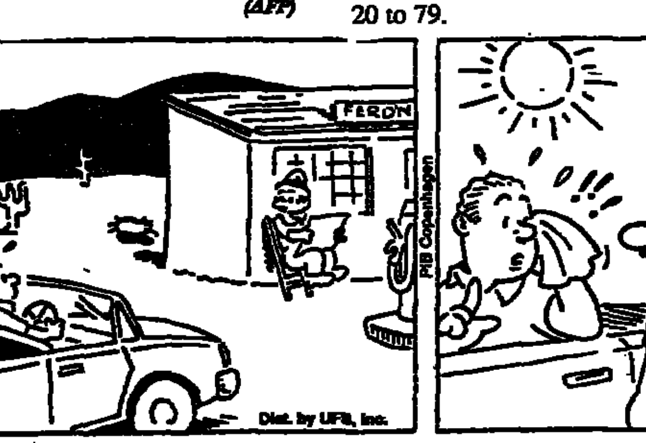
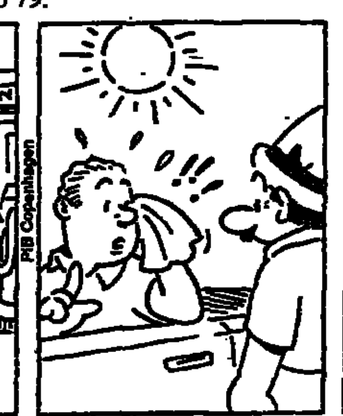
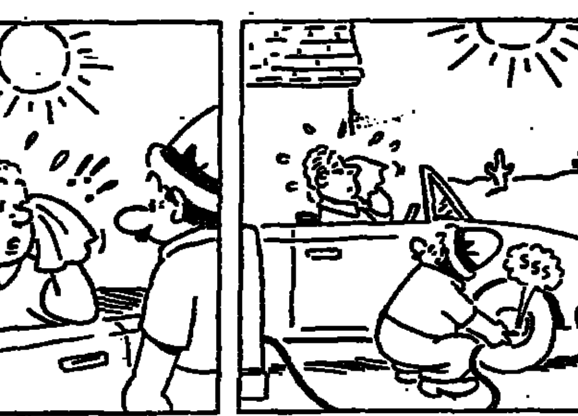
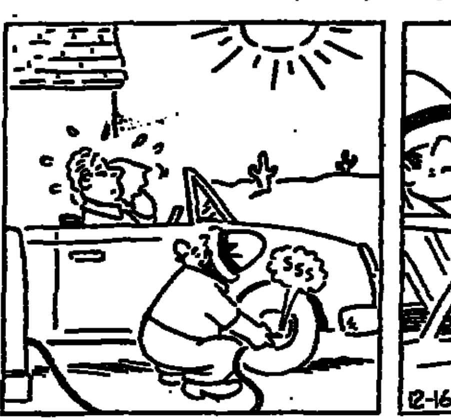
(Reuter)



SCRABBLE BRAND GRAMS SOLUTION BY JUDD © 1995, United Feature Syndicate, Inc

A1 T1 T1 E1 S1 T1 S1	RACK 1 = 57
B3 E1 M3 O1 A1 N1	RACK 2 = 13
P3 O1 N1 T1 I1 F4 F4	RACK 3 = 65
C3 O1 N1 T1 E1 S1 T1	RACK 4 = 77
PAR SCORE 135-145	JUDD'S TOTAL 212

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Ex-Chief Surgeon Defends Persian Gulf Syndrome Probe's Pace

LONDON — Britain's former surgeon general defended the government's slow action in investigating Persian Gulf war illness on Friday, saying it took a long time to find enough sufferers to justify a probe.

Sir Peter Beale, now chief medical adviser to the British Red Cross, said he had only learned of a legal campaign on the mysterious syndrome 18 months after the end of the Persian Gulf war in 1991. Appeals for sufferers to come forward only turned up a handful at first.

In answering the criticism that these expensive studies should have been undertaken earlier, I have tried to show how difficult it has been to decide exactly when this decision could have been made, Beale wrote in the *British Medical Journal*.

Beale said one doctor was assigned to investigate but by June, 1994, he had seen only 30 sufferers — a tiny percentage of the 40,000 servicemen and women Britain sent to help out in the war.

It was not until January of this year that 1,100 were registered, and more than 900 had been fully investigated.

Britain now has agreed to conduct full epidemiological studies into the syndrome.

U.S. and British veterans have been suing for recognition of Persian Gulf war illness, which has symptoms ranging from rashes to chronic fatigue.

Lawyers for 1,000 British veterans say a cocktail of immunizations to protect them against chemical and biological warfare and to help them adjust to desert conditions is the likely cause.

Others say it could have been the use of organophosphate pesticides, which they say affect the nervous system.

Yet others blame chemical or biological weapons they say might have been used secretly by Iraqi President Saddam Hussein's troops against the alliance that drove them out of Kuwait in 1991. In the United States some health workers claim they have caught the illness from veterans.

Earlier this month Parliament's all-party Defense Committee criticized two defense ministers for persistently denying that British troops were subjected to dangerous chemicals as they prepared for the Persian Gulf war.

Ministers at first said pesticides were used on only a very small scale to stop the spread of disease among British troops, but later said their use had been much more widespread than previously believed.

In the United States, President Bill Clinton established the Presidential Advisory Committee on Persian Gulf War Veterans' Illnesses in May, 1995. It published a final report in December last year.

Clinton has extended the eligibility period for compensating Persian Gulf war veterans with undiagnosed illnesses to 2001, saying they should get paid even if science cannot pinpoint the causes of their illnesses.

(Reuter)

Sri Lanka Aims to Bypass Politics to End War

COLOMBO — Sri Lanka's ruling people's alliance and the main opposition United National Party (UNP) have agreed to work together to end the country's protracted ethnic war, the government said on Thursday.

Sri Lankan Foreign Minister Lakshman Kadirgamar said in a statement on behalf of President Chandrika Kumaratunga and opposition leader Ranil Wickremesinghe that the two parties were aiming at a common approach to solve the crisis.

(Reuter)

Serbs, Ethnic Albanian Are Far Apart on Kosovo ahead of Talks

BELGRADE, Yugoslavia — U.S.-hosted talks on one of Europe's hottest political issues — Serbia's troubled Kosovo Province — could collapse even before they have started.

Bickering between rival Serbs and ethnic Albanians over who should control the impoverished southern province still makes it unclear who will attend and what the outcome of the talks, scheduled for April 7-9 in New York, might be.

After two abortive efforts, the Serb-Albanian talks organized by the New York-based Carnegie Corp. constitute the third attempt to open negotiations on the tense province.

But with turmoil in neighboring Albania and Serbia still highly unstable, the upcoming meeting could be the last chance to break the deadlock and avoid bloodshed in the region where ethnic Albanians account for 90 percent of the 1.9 million people.

"This might be the last moment to solve the Kosovo issue," said a top ethnic Albanian official, Hidajet Hiseni. "But for that we need good will and a desire to reach a just and peaceful solution."

A compromise seems far away.

The non-binding talks are supposed to gather representatives from Serbia's parliamentary parties, a Serb from Kosovo and an ethnic Albanian delegation.

President Slobodan Milosevic's ruling socialists, the key participants, have not yet confirmed they'll take part.

The representatives of Serbia's democratic opposition, also invited to attend, insist that if Milosevic doesn't go, they will stay away.

And in case they attend, their negotiating position is firm.

"The Kosovo problem can be solved only within Serbia, whose part it always has been and will be," said Vuk Draskovic, a Serbian opposition leader.

Serbs, who consider Kosovo the heartland of their culture and history, rule out the region's secession from Serbia.

Milosevic abolished Kosovo's broad autonomy in 1989. He has ruled the province with heavy military and police power despite harsh international criticism and calls for dialogue.

Ethnic Albanians responded with demands for independence from Serbia. They have created their own parallel institutions in Kosovo, including education and health systems.

Although obviously seeking independence, ethnic Albanian leaders recently hinted that they may compromise, pledging to accept international mediation.

The United States and European powers have insisted that Kosovo must remain part of Serbia, but with a broad autonomy.

"The success of talks between Kosovo and Serbia is determined by international mediation," said the leader of the Kosovo Albanians, Ibrahim Rugova. "The United States and the European Union should take a leading role in the settlement."

In the last decade, the dispute over the ethnic Albanians' separatist movement has led to more than 200 deaths and thousands of arrests.

A recent spate of terrorist attacks, which killed at least six Serbs and three ethnic Albanians loyal to them, further heightened tensions in the volatile province.

Serbian opposition leaders travel to Washington on Thursday to seek U.S. support for further democratization of Serbia. Kosovo is likely to be on the agenda.

A possible conflict in Kosovo could ultimately spread to much of the rest of the Balkans.

"We must all be aware that extreme demands cannot be fulfilled without a war," warned Dusan Mihajlovic, leader of the moderate New Democracy Party, which is allied with Milosevic.

"But then we would all end up losers," said Mihajlovic, who said he would attend the talks.

(AP)

Taiwan Ruling Party to Give President More Power

TAIPEI — Taiwan's ruling Nationalist Party said on Thursday it planned to boost the powers of the president by giving him the final word on a host of major issues.

The plan, which would relegate the premier to the role of a chief of staff, was seen by critics as creating a president with dictatorial powers and jeopardizing Taiwan's hard-won democracy.

In a meeting late on Wednesday, the Nationalist Party approved a plan to grant the president the power to make important decisions on policies concerning national security, defense, foreign affairs and issues concerning rival China, party officials said.

Under the plan, the premier will execute important decisions made by the president, and Parliament will have no right to override the decisions or ask the cabinet to change it, Tan Chi-Tung, a party spokesman, told Reuters.

But the plan still needs approval by the National Assembly, he said. The National Assembly, a separate body from Parliament, has the function of revising the constitution.

The Nationalist Party, with 183 members, has a majority in the 334-seat assembly, which will meet on May 5 to discuss constitutional amendments.

The proposal drew sharp criticism from the opposition and even some Nationalist Party lawmakers.

Taiwan President Lee Teng-Hui is trying to make himself the emperor of Taiwan. The principle of democratic politics is to maintain a checks and balances system, said Cheng Pao-Ching, a lawmaker of the main opposition Democratic Progressive Party.

Chen Kuai-Miao, head of the right-wing New Party, said his party would never agree to the plan.

It would be ridiculous and unreasonable if Parliament could not even have a say in national security affairs, he said.

Nationalist Party lawmaker Chen Hung-Chi said it would be improper to take away the balancing powers of Parliament.

Political analysts said the proposal would make the head of state all-powerful.

Worst of all, the president is not responsible to Parliament, and the premier, who is responsible to Parliament, does not have power, Hu Fo, a law professor at National Taiwan University, told Reuters.

Analysts said the plan was designed to boost the faltering influence of the Nationalist Party, which has run Taiwan since being driven by communists from mainland China in 1949.

The ruling party maintains only a wafer-thin majority in the 164-seat Parliament, and opposition lawmakers can easily join forces to block proposals by the nationalists.

If Parliament is deprived of the right to veto, there will be no challenge to major nationalist government policies, professor Hu said.

But Hsin Chih-Jen, a ruling party National Assembly member, said giving more power to the president could help avert a political crisis if the government and Parliament were controlled by different political parties.

After all, the president is directly elected by the people and he is thus responsible to the people, not Parliament, he said.

(Reuter)

Congress Party's Woes Mount With Income Tax Penalty

NEW DELHI, India — In the midst of a battle to oust Prime Minister H.D. Deve Gowda, the Congress Party found itself Friday under attack from income tax authorities.

Tax assessors have slapped a 240-million-rupee ($6.8-million) fine on the Congress Party for failing to disclose the names of major Indian and foreign contributors, officials said.

Federal investigators also are probing the assets of Sitaram Kesari, the Congress Party chief. The investigation follows up a petition filed in the New Delhi high court accusing Kesari of amassing wealth disproportionate to his known sources of income.

Last Sunday, Congress withdrew its support from Gowda's minority United Front coalition, without which it cannot survive. Under directives of India's president, Parliament will convene next Friday for a confidence vote.

As the two political blocs head for the showdown, the cases against Congress have raised mutual accusations of misusing power.

In carefully managed leaks to the media, Congress charges that Gowda's government is conducting a witch hunt to sully the party's image at a critical time.

On the other side, Kesari is suspected of hastening his decision to withdraw support to the 10-month-old United Front government to gain power so that he can forestall the investigations.

No party has enough seats for a majority in the 545-member Lok Sabha, the Lower House of Parliament. The United Front and the Congress need each other to keep out their common foe, the Hindu Nationalist Bharatiya Janata Party, which won the most seats in elections last year.

Efforts continued Friday by leaders of the rival camps to work out a face saving formula to avoid a second general election in less than a year.

Former Prime Minister V.P. Singh, a cancer patient, was leading a reconciliation effort from his sixth-floor hospital bed, receiving a stream of politicians from both sides.

The income tax authorities served a penalty notice on the Congress Party after the 1996-97 financial year ended on March 31.

But the party had known for months it was coming.

Notice was given four months ago that it was under investigation and was required to submit the names of donors giving more than 10,000 rupees ($286), the *Hindustan Times* newspaper quoted A.K. Batabyal, the chief income tax commissioner, as saying.

Although political parties are exempt from income tax, they are required to file returns showing all donations over 10,000 rupees ($286).

Batabyal said: "In view of the basic information not being available (from Congress Party), the Income Tax Department was constrained to finalize the assessment order in accordance with law on March 31."

(AP)

Hong Kong Must Develop Democratic Political System Gradually

HONG KONG — Hong Kong must develop its own democratic political system in "a gradual and orderly way," Rita Fan, president of the China-picked provisional legislature, said Friday.

"It is prudent and pragmatic to devleop a democratic political system for Hong Kong in accordance with the principle of gradual and orderly progress," said Fan, who heads the interim body widely opposed by pro-democracy groups and some Western countries.

Fan said the basic law, a mini constitution serving post-1997 Hong Kong, "ensures the progressive development of democracy in Hong Kong."

"Our new constitution has provided the framework, and our future prosperity and stability will depend on our own efforts, energy and enterprise," said Fan, who was speaking at a seminar marking the 7th anniversary of the promulgation of the basic law.

"The political system outlined in the basic law offers true democracy and higher degree of participation for Hong Kong people," said Fan.

"I have full reason to believe that Hong Kong people are able to manage Hong Kong well," she added.

She said the charter reflected the concept of 'one country, two systems' and the policy of "Hong Kong people ruling Hong Kong," showing "the high degree of confidence in Hong Kong people's ability and wisdom" by the Chinese central government in Beijing.

Fan also criticized Governor Chris Patten for implementing its political reforms and thus prompted China to replace the current Elected Legislative Council with the interim body.

The 60-member provisional legislature, comprising pro-Beijing politicians and businessmen, will replace the Elected Legislative Council (LEGCO) set up by Britain's outgoing colonial government.

Britain, backed by democrats in Hong Kong, has clashed with China over Beijing's plans to scrap the current Elected Legislature.

The row began after Governor Chris Patten introducted voting reforms, which culminated last year in the colony's first-ever democratic elections.

Several Western countries including Australia and the United States have criticized the provisional legislature, and urged China to let the elected assembly see out its four-year mandate until September 1999.

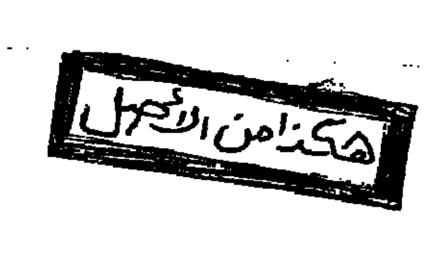
Fan said the future legisture of the special administrative region which Hong Kong will be called after the handover on July 1 will possess more power than the current LEGCO with the authority to impeach the chief executive.

Fan said the current LEGCO did not have the status to challenge the governor of Hong Kong, who was invariably appointed by the British government without any consultation with the people of Hong Kong.

She said the selection of chief executive Tung Chee-Hwa by a China-formed electoral body on December 11 was "a democratic procedure" made possible by the basic law.

(AFP)





President Calls on Muslim World to Support Palestinians' Uprising

ISLAMABAD — President Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani said in a meeting with Syrian Vice-President Abd al-Halim Khaddam that Tel Aviv rulers' aggressive nature and their enmity with Muslim world and Arabs has become more clear.

President Rafsanjani said that by using the veto right to prevent condemnation of the Zionist regime at the UN Security Council for its aggressions, the U.S. has made its alliance with the entity clearer and showed that it did not attach any importance to human rights and friendship with Arab states.

Calling Zionist regime's peace slogan as false, President Rafsanjani underlined that time made falsehood of such claims crystal clear for all.

He said that Muslim world should support resistance by the oppressed Palestinian nation against illegitimate Zionist regime's aggressions and Palestinians should be supported by world of Islam in their efforts to regain their denied rights with firm determination.

He said that cooperation between Tehran and Damascus was pivotal with the objective of defending Palestinians' rights.

He expressed hope that having witnessed recent events, Muslim governments should have distinguished enemy from friend and beef up cooperation in order to defend Muslim world's interests and dignity.

Khaddam said for his part that extremist measures adopted by Israel had left no way for Palestinas but strengthening of Intifadha. He underlined that grounds were prepared for further cooperation among Muslim states with an aim to confront Israel's aggressions.

(IRNA)

President Meets With His Pakistani Counterpart

ISLAMABAD — President Akbar Hashemi Rafanjani said in a meeting with his Pakistani counterpart Farooq Ahmad Khan Leghari on March 24 that Iran would deepen its relations with the newly elected popular-based Pakistani administration.

President Rafsanjani congratulated Leghari on Pakistan's independence anniversary and said that Iran and Pakistan as two friends and Muslim regional states should have more active and effective cooperation in line with Pakistani people's interests.

He said that Iran strived for completing laying of Kerman-Zahedan track in near future to link Pakistan with Europe and Central Asia.

Leghari for his part expressed hope that economic and commercial transactions at bilateral and regional levels would further expand once construction of the road is complete.

He said that Pakistani nation and government considered sincere and friendly ties with Iran as a solid and reliable foundation stone for expansion and strengthening of regional cooperation. He expressed hope that Iran and Pakistan would succeed in vigilantly upgrading bilateral economic, commercial, political and cultural relations in light of removing regional disputes.

As for Afghan crisis, Leghari said that Pakistan believed in further exchange of views with Iran to remove the ongoing crisis in Afghanistan and restore a lasting peace and stability in the country based on Afghans' will.

(IRNA)

Iran's Foreign Policy Based on Expanding Relations With Neighbors

ISLAMABAD — Qatari heir apparent Sheikh Jassim bin Hamad al-Thani in a meeting with President Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani said that his country is ready to attend the 8th summit of the Organization of Islamic Conference, which is to be held in Tehran in December, 1997. Al-Thani said that having fully understood Iran's importance in the region, Doha is interested in all-out expansion of its relations with Tehran. President Rafsanjani for his part, underlining that Iran's foreign policy is based on expansion of relations with neighboring states, especially the Persian Gulf littoral states, said that Iran welcomed consolidation of its relations with Qatar.

(IRNA)

Habibi Congratulates Simitis on Greece's Independence Day

TEHRAN — Iran's First Vice-President Hassan Habibi cabled a message to Greek Prime Minister Costas Simitis congratulating the Greek government and people on the Independence Day of Greece.

In his message the vice-president recalled the "positive and constructive" talks he had held with Simitis in Athens and said a bright prospect was waiting for Iran-Greece relations.

Habibi also hoped that Tehran-Athens relations would expand in every field in the wake of the insigh and good will of officials of the two countries.

(IRNA)

Velayati Outlines Outcome of His Persian Gulf Visit

ABU DHABI — Foreign Minister Ali-Akbar Velayati said here that a new chapter has been opened in relations between Tehran and the Persian Gulf littoral states based on mutual understanding, confidence and collective efforts with an aim to maintain security in the sensitive Persian Gulf region.

Velayati made the remark in an interview with IRNA at the end of his six-nation tour of Persian Gulf littoral states to hand President Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani's invitation message to heads of the said states for attending the 8th summit of the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC), which is to be held in Tehran in December.

He said that his visit had been highly successful in view of the wide-scale negative propaganda launched by the Americans against Iran.

He added that during his talks with heads of the Persian Gulf states and high ranking officials his hosts had noted the significance of relations with Tehran. Despite the poisonous propaganda they were willing to expand their relations with Tehran and remove whatever disputes were their in this regard, he added.

He said that he had held highly important talks with Saudi king and heir apparent as well as clear and candid talks with Saudi Foreign Minister, which could serve as a turning point in Tehran-Riyadh relations.

As two important regional states, he added, Iran and Saudi Arabia should strive for strengthening their cooperation.

Velayati said that he and King Fahd had emphasized that a new chapter should be opened in bilateral ties and that the two countries should look towards the future instead of the past.

He specified that Iranian and Saudi officials believed that realistic and constructive attitude towards bilateral relations would prevent foreign influence and remove misunderstandings.

Switching to outcome of his visit to the UAE, Velayati said the invitation extended to UAE President Sheikh Zayed bin Sultan al Nahyan to attend the OIC summit meet could be taken as a positive move to smooth bilateral relations and remove disputes.

He added that in his talks with the UAE Deputy Prime Minister Sheikh Sultan bin Zayed the two sides had stressed on efforts to remove disputes.

He said the Americans were angry at the Iranian delegation's visit to the Persian Gulf region, because they felt danger to their vested interests in this area. He added that the U.S. policy is to create tension and misportray Islamic Iran as a threat.

He specified that Iran's principled policies were based on expansion of cooperation and maintenance of security in the Persian Gulf region and that he had held talks with heads of state of the countries he visited on establishment of mutual understanding, building up confidence, promotion of cooperation and collective efforts.

On his visit to Bahrain, Velayati said that Bahraini officials had expressed their willingnes to improve their relations with Iran. Calling his visits to Qatar, Kuwait and Oman as highly positive, Velayati said that basic step had been taken to improve bilateral relations.

(IRNA)

Islamic Students Association of Europe Congratulates Islamic Republic Day

PARIS — The Islamic Associations of Iranian Students in Europe issued a statement on the threshold of 12th Farvardin 12 (April 1), the day when the Iranian nation gave an overwhelming votes for establishment of the Islamic Republic system in Iran in 1979.

In their statement titled 'Islam and Republicansim', the Iranian students congratulated the Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyed Ali Khamenei and the Iranian nation on the 18th anniversary of the Islamic Republic Day.

It added that by opting for a genuinely Islamic system, Iran presented a precious gift to the world and to the Father of the Islamic Revolution, the late Imam Khomeini, at a time when anti-Islamic values ruled the world.

Imam Khomeini initiated a giant movement by working out the broadlines of the Islamic goverment, establishing the principle of Velayat-e Faqih, and reviving Islam as a political power, pointed the statement.

(IRNA)

NATO Cancels Exercise Off Spain, Cites National Commitments

NAPLES, Italy — The planned military mission to protect aid to Albania has caused NATO to cancel a two-week exercise off Spain, officials said.

NATO said "national operational commitments" caused some of the nations taking part to withdraw or cut sharply their participation. It cited the United States, Italy and France.

U.S. warships and troops due to head for Spain are staying in the adriatic sea off Albania because of the Chaotic situation there, said Navy Commander Bob Anderson, a U.S. military spokesman in Stuttgart, Germany.

The helicopters from the vessels were used in evacuating Americans from Albania several weeks ago.

Contingency planning for a potential U.S. evacuation of Zaire, scene of a civil war, also diverted forces from the exercise, Anderson said.

The French Defense Ministry confirmed its commitment to send some 1,000 troops to Albania was the reason for its withdrawal from operation "Destined Glory 97," scheduled to take place April 7-20 in the western Mediterranean, the Gulf of Cadiz and southern Spain. Italy is leading the Albania force. It will contribute up to half of the 5,000-member mission, which is not expected to get off the ground before April 15.

A Defense Ministry spokesman said he could not comment on the exercise withdrawal.

Germany, Greece, the Netherlands, Turkey and Britain also were to take part. NATO's southern command is based here.

(AP)

Kohl Says He Wants to Run Again in 1998 Election

BAD HOFGASTEIN, Austria — German Chancellor Helmut Kohl celebrated his 67th birthday on Thursday April 3 with a surprise announcement that he planned to stand for reelection in 1998 for an unprecedented fifth term.

In an interview with ARD television, Kohl said he felt he had an obligation to run again in the next general election in late 1998 because Germany faced many important challenges.

In the interview, held during his 10-day Easter holiday in the Austrian mountain resort of Bad Hofgastein south of Salzburg, he said he wanted to play a role in NATO's eastward expansion, European integration and the launch of a single European currency.

I have thought about this very carefully here, the path I have taken in these years and the burdens and the challenges, Kohl said. I will stand again because I believe I have an obligation to do this in the current situation. Kohl, a Christian Democrat (CDU) who is already post-war Germany's longest-serving chancellor, took office in 1982 and has defeated four social democratic challengers since then. Only Count Otto von Bismarck, who was chancellor for 19 years and two months in the late 19th century, held power longer than Kohl.

His political allies have been urging him to declare his candidacy early to help rally support within the party and put pressure on the opposition SPD. Kohl has repeatedly dodged questions about his 1998 plans since quickly retreating from an unguarded comment in 1994 that he did not plan to govern into the next century.

As recently as February, he said he would not announce his decision until later this year. Even Germany's leading newspaper, the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, said in a frontpage story that Kohl probably would not announce his decision until June.

But in the interview, the chancellor dropped his usual evasive style and beamed when the ARD interviewer asked if he planned to run again in 1998.

A very clear yes, Kohl said. I will stand again if my party and political friends want that. This is not an individual decision made at the top of the Mount Olympus.

Even though Kohl's popularity has slumped in recent months as the economy has stalled and the unemployment rate has surged to post-war record high levels, there is little doubt that Kohl is his party's best chance to retain power in 1998.

SPD Chairman Oskar Lafontaine is first in line for his party's nomination. But he has already lost to Kohl once in 1990 and is running behind him in opinion surveys.

Another SPD leader, lower Saxony state Premier Gerhard Schroeder, consistently runs ahead of Kohl in popularity polls but is less popular within the left-leaning SPD itself.

Kohl said in the ARD interview, which will be broadcast on Thursday evening, that he wanted to stay in office because there were many areas in need of reform in Germany.

I want to pursue the necessary reforms, Kohl said.

Kohl declined to answer a question about whether he would serve out the full four years of a fifth term. He would be 68 years old if he wins reelection next year. Kohl said because he had not yet been reelected, such a question was speculation.

(Reuter)

FM Spokesman Says Norway Can't Confront World of Islam

TEHRAN — Norway can not confront world of Islam, said Foreign Ministry spokesman Mahmoud Mohammadi here on March 24.

Mohammadi called Norwegian deputy foreign minister's plea from the international community for Iran's economic punishment as unrealistic and beyond Norway's political credit. He said that such assertions would not bring about credit for Norway but revealed the fact that the country followed Israel's hostile policies against Islam and Muslims.

He added that words by a non-governmental institute should not serve as a pretext by Norway to adopt such a stance against Iran. The Iranian official said that constructive talks between Iran and the European Union (EU) as a diplomatic approach in bilateral rlations, would guaratee mutual interests.

He added that such an assertion by a Norwegian official indicated the country's concern with a decrease in volume of bilateral transactions.

(IRNA)

Iran, Successful in Antidrug Campaign

VIENNA — Secretary of the Iranian Headquarters for Narcotics Control Mohammad Fallah said that Iran has been very successful in her fight against drug trafficking with relative success in preventing new addictions. The Iranian official who was talking to IRNA on the sideline of the Assembly of the UN Commission for Narcotics Control said that drug consumption in many world countries had grown by up to five times in the past few years. He said as the result of the adoption in Iran of foolproof devices for controlling drug trafficking, traffickers had more recently turned to unconventional handling technics such as swallowing of narcotics for trafficking purposes. He said that the Iranian delegation in the assembly had proposed that the United Nations undertake an international study for identifying the best possible methods for giving up addiction. He said it was agreed that the proposition would be studied later on by a commission that had been formed for the same purpose.

The Iranian official said that the Islamic Republic had expended hundreds of millions of dollars for closing her borders to traffickers and for curbing trafficking of narcotics into other countries.

(IRNA)

Business Sees New Energy Source in Hydrogen

MALVERN, PA —If Dr. Randell Mills is right, the way the world produces and uses energy is about to be radically transformed, along with science's understanding of the physics involved.

If he is wrong, he will join a long line of failed seekers for the holy grail of cheap, safe and non-polluting energy.

Mills has developed, and begun to demonstrate in laboratory tests, what he says is a very efficient and non-polluting means of producing energy from hydrogen. He says a fuel cell the size of a desk could in theory supply the electricity now produced by an eight-floor-high coal-fired boiler, and a 200-horsepower car engine the size of a suitcase could power a vehicle four times around the world on a single tank of water.

"Whoever has this technology can potentially dominate the energy industry."

The technology, and Mills's private company, Blacklight Power Inc., have begun to attract investment from the electricity industry and the support of some energy experts. A leading organization of physicists, however, calls his idea groundless, while even some who support the technology say its practical application remains at least a few years away.

"Whoever has this technology can potentially dominate the energy industry," said Mills, a Harvard-trained medical doctor with additional education in engineering and chemistry.

The technology is based on a theory of quantum physics that challenges principles that have governed the science for decades. Mills says the theory has been supported by experiments and observation. It holds that hydrogen can exist at a lower energy state than its common ground state, and the heat energy released in the transition to the lower state can be captured.

From Quarks to the Cosmos

Mills told Reuters the theory explains phenomena ranging in scale from (sub-atomic) quarks to the cosmos. In using it to make power, the cost of hydrogen, easily obtainable from water, would be minimal compared with fossil fuels, and there is more than enough water to last until the end of the earth, he said.

Capital costs also could be significantly lower than conventional power technology, Mills said, although others familiar with the technology said that remains to be seen.

The by-product of the non-nuclear process is a hydrogen atom with a lower form of energy — called a hydrino — that floats off into space, he said. The other key ingredient in the process is potassium, which serves as a catalyst and can be constantly reused. The process takes place in a vacuum and instantly stops if the vacuum is breached, making it inherently safe, Mills said.

Some experts, including a former top Reagan administration nuclear energy official, say Mills is on the right track. The electricity industry has begun to get involved, investing money in the company and negotiating licensing deals.

"I'm convinced that there is something of enormous impact here and it's only a question of time until we can garner the capital and infrastructure to take it into commercialization," said Shelby Brewer, assistant energy secretary under Reagan and former head of ABB Combustion Engineering, one of the world's largest makers of electrical generation equipment.

Revolution Predicted

"If we can engineer this into the marketplace ... it will revolutionize energy production both for electricity and mobile applications," said Brewer, who now heads an energy consulting firm. He said he overcame his skepticism, born of thousands of unfounded new-power ideas he has seen, to work as an outside financial and strategic adviser to Mills.

Others, including the country's leading organization of academic physicists, dismiss Mills and his hydrino theory out of hand. "It has no credibility whatever ... as far as I'm concerned Mills is not a scientist," said Robert Park, director of the Washington office of the American Physical Society.

"There is virtually nothing that science does not know about the hydrogen atom," Park said. "The ground state is defined as the (energy) state below which you cannot go. ... The thought there is some state below the ground state is kind of humorous."

But a Penn State University test done for Blacklight of a small fuel cell designed by Mills recorded heat production 100 times greater than that produced by burning hydrogen, another technology being studied as an energy source.

The result was promising and consistent with his theory, the unpublished findings said. "The evidence presented in this report clearly suggests that an extraordinary phenomenon takes place ... this phenomenon appears to generate a tremendous amount of 'excess' heat. But the report urged a cautious approach be taken and said additional experimental work was required."

"There is virtually nothing that science does not know about the hydrogen atom," Park said. "The ground state is defined as the (energy) state below which you cannot go. ... The thought there is some state below the ground state is kind of humorous."

Similar results have been obtained in other laboratories, including in a test run by Peter Jansson, an engineer and manager of market development for Atlantic Energy Inc. Jansson, who conducted the test independently of his company, said Atlantic Energy was strongly considering what he called a strategic investment in Blacklight Power.

Last year, Oregon-based utility holding firm Pacificorp invested $1 million in a stake in Blacklight Power, according to documents filed with Pennsylvania regulators.

Mills has obtained a patent on his technology in Australia and said he expects to receive U.S. and European patents this year. In the process he has had to explain to patent examiners why his technology is not the same as cold fusion, a low-temperature nuclear technology that also promised vast, cheap power, but which failed to stand up.

His early work was watched by the cold-fusion camp and some research findings supporting his hydrino theory were published in a peer-reviewed *Journal of the American Nuclear Society*, which has been an outlet for cold-fusion related research.

Turning Ideas Into Business

Now is a timely moment to try to commercialize a new energy technology, experts say. The electrical industry worldwide is moving from tight regulation to a highly competitive market in which the producer of the cheapest power wins.

"We are definitely willing to put some time and money into it (the technology)," said Tom Cassel, president of Reading Energy Co., a Philadelphia firm that commercializes advanced power-plant technology. "Is it at this point a fail-safe deal? It's still early to tell," he said. "The laboratory work is compelling (but) it's yet to be demonstrated on a large, self-sustained basis."

Mills said plans are underway to build with another firm a test plant to produce about one megawatt of energy, equivalent to the amount needed to light a small shopping center.

Cassel said he is negotiating a deal with Blacklight for reading to retrofit older plants, shuttered because of expensive anti-pollution requirements or other economic factors, with the Blacklight hydrogen cells.

He said he was at first skeptical of the technology and was warned by a senior Ivy League scientist who started reading Mills' theory that these type of people are dangerous. But he said he and others who have studied the entire theory and seen the test results are convinced of its potential.

"This is very real," he said. "It's a development which, if it keeps going in the way that a number of very qualified people think it's going to go ... it will be on the magnitude of the Edisons, the Einsteins, that type of scientific revolution."

More information on Mills's theory and power process can be found on Blacklight Power's World Wide Web site at http://www.blacklightpower.com/.

(Reuter)

Short People Get a Leg Up in New Russian Clinic

MOSCOW — From the banks of the Volga River comes important news for the "vertically challenged".

Using technology developed in the Soviet era, doctors in Volgograd, in Russia's deep south, claim they can make short people three to 12 centimeters (one to 4-1/2 inches) taller.

Using technology developed in the Soviet era, doctors in Volgograd, in Russia's deep south, claim they can make short people three to 12 centimeters (one to 4-1/2 inches) taller.

How? With an orthopedic apparatus that realigns a patient's bone structure in the legs.

"It is placed around the leg, with fine points penetrating into the skin and fixing onto the bone," said Mikhail Goldreer, who is promoting a center dedicated to the operation.

"Slowly, the form or length (of the limb) is modified. Altogether, with necessary physical exercises to strengthen the bone structure, the process takes six month," he said.

Goldreer, a former electrical engineer, said he went through the process himself, growing six centimeters (nearly three inches) to 1.76 meters (six-foot-nine).

His days as a relatively short man ended in 1992, after he spent years trying to convince Soviet Communist Party cadres, then Russian health authorities, to let him have the treatment.

Developed in the 1960s by Professor Gavril Ilizarov, it had already been put to good use to help mend the legs of accident victims.

It is known in many other countries, including the United States, but principally for the correction of deformed limbs.

One of Ilizarov's disciples, Professor Mikhail Yegorov, "stretched" Goldreer in 1992, but operations then still had to be done clandestinely.

Now they are more frequent and open, although the list of patients is an elite one, including popular singer Vika Tsiganova, the anonymous wife of a Russian cabinet minister and the head of a metals conglomerate, Goldreer said.

Russia's economic crisis helped. With little money left in the state treasury, health facilities are looking for new ways to bring in funds — and as a consequence, official conservatism is overcome.

From the clinic in a park, Yegorov and his team has been offering their body-extending services since February, complete with sauna, tennis, swimming pool, beauty center and plastic surgery.

Surgeons and assistants have been trained in recent months in Moscow.

And now, with support from the local Voltair tire factory's sports center, "We now are ready to welcome foreign clients," Goldreer said.

"We hope to become a profitable center, known the world over," he said.

In Paris, Professor Henri Bensahel of Robert Debre Hospital said the technique has been used for medical purposes on very short people.

He himself recalled one instance in which he performed the operation on a youngster who was 1.45 meters tall (four-foot-eight).

Its use for esthetic purposes is "an interesting social phenomenon", he said.

In Volgograd, it comes with a price tag of $4,000 to $6,000, plus $700 a month for the hospital stay that includes sports facilities.

"We hope to become a profitable center, known the world over."

But Goldreer said it was worth it: "The operation hurts a bit at the beginning, but it leaves no scars." (AFP)

INTELSAT Chooses Arianespace for New Satellite

PARIS — The International Satellite Telecommunications Organization (INTELSAT) has chosen Arianespace for launching its latest satellite, the K-TV INTELSAT television satellite, late next year or in early 1999, Arianespace announced on Thursday.

It will be the organization's 18th satellite launched by a European rocket since the INTELSAT-V-F7 was orbited by the 7th Ariane, in October 1983. Three INTELSAT-VIII satellites will be Arianespace passengers by mid-1998.

INTELSAT has actually chosen Europe twice for this contract, in that INTELSAT K-TV will be built in Toulouse with Matra Marconi Space as prime contractor.

The contract was signed at INTELSAT headquarters in Washington by the organization's director general, Irving Goldstein, and by Arianespace chief Charles Bigot.

(AFP)

Probe Detects Organic Molecules on Jupiter Moons

PARIS — The U.S. space probe Galileo may have detected microscopic life forms on the surfaces of two of Jupiter's moons, the *New Scientist* says in its latest edition.

The British weekly, which comes out on Saturday, says that four substances including one containing carbon and nitrogen — basic components of living organisms — were detected on the two moons, Ganymede and Callisto.

The discovery was broached at a recent planetology conference in Houston, Texas, the *New Scientist* said.

The presence of three of the substances — ice with mineral traces, ice and sulfur dioxide — is no real surprise as all three have been detected in numerous corners of the universe.

But the fourth compound including the carbon and nitrogen atoms is of interest, as complex life substances can be formed from such a mix.

Galileo was launched in 1989 and has already taken in four of Jupiter's 16 moons. On the Europa moon, Galileo detected volcanoes and glaciers, reinforcing the theory that microscopic life might exist on Jupiter's moon.

(AFP)

Russia to Supply Fuel for Chernobyl

KIEV — Russia will supply fuel for the only active reactor of Ukraine's Chernobyl nuclear power plant, officials said.

The reactor has been operating at half of its capacity for the second week in a row.

The fuel to be delivered from Russia will last two to three months, the plant information center said recently.

Officials at the Directorate of Emergency Situations of the Ministry of the Environment and Nuclear Safety told ITAR-TASS that for the reactor to operate normally, fuel has to be delivered within a month of the date when it began operating at reduced capacity. Otherwise, the reactor has to be stopped, which may endanger the plant's safety.

Last time fuel was delivered in July 1996.

(IRNA)

U.S. Approves Rules on Digital Television Licenses

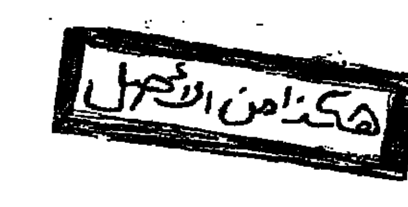
WASHINGTON — The Federal Communications Commission approved rules Thursday granting digital television licenses to broadcasters, clearing the way for the start of high-definition television by late 1998.

Under the rules, TV station owners will be granted licenses free of charge to begin broadcasting digitally.

In exchange, the television networks — Walt Disney Co.'s ABC, General Electric Co.'s NBC, Westinghouse Corp.'s CBS, and News Corp.'s Fox — must begin broadcasting digitally by the end of 1999 in the nation's 10 largest TV markets.

The networks have agreed to begin broadcasting digitally by Christmas 1998.

(Contd on Pg. 14)



Letter Shows Mercenaries Sought an Interest in Copper Mine

PORT MORESBY, Papua New Guinea — The mercenary company hired to crush a separatist uprising in Papua New Guinea sought a stake in the country's lucrative copper mine in exchange for fighting the rebels, an investigator said Thursday.

The question of whether the mercenary firm — Sandline International — sought a stake in the country's valuable natural resources is a key issue for a judicial inquiry into the hiring of the mercenaries to crush the rebellion on the island of Bougainville.

The $36-million mercenary contract caused outrage in the military, which was angered that the government was spending millions on the foreign fighters when the army was underpaid and poorly equipped.

Army Brig. Gen. Jerry Singirok claimed the government was corrupt and charged that Prime Minister Julius Chan was trading away national assets to foreign mercenary companies.

A 1996 letter presented Thursday by Ian Molloy, the lawyer assisting the inquiry, was the first concrete evidence that such a tradeoff was considered.

The letter from Sandline International chief executive Tim Spicer to the country's defense minister confirmed the offer.

Spicer testified the offer was rejected.

Papua New Guinea has been fighting separatist rebels on Bougainville, a copper-rich island 800 miles (1,300 kilometers) northeast of Port Moresby.

The rebellion began in 1988 as an environmental protest, then escalated into a secessionist war. About 1,000 people have died in the fighting. (AP)

Countdown Begins for Repatriation of Chakma Refugees

NEW DELHI — The first batch of some 5,000 refugees out of 51,000 Bangladeshi Chakma tribals, who fled their homes in southeastern Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT) in Bangladesh to take refuge in northeast India's Tripura state 11-years back, will return to their homes thereby bringing to an end one of the sub-continent's biggest refugee problems. The repatriation of 5,000 Buddhist Chakma refugees from 'Kathalcharri Camp' in south Tripura will take place under a 20-point accord signed between Bangladesh authorities and the tribal rebels during a visit by a high-powered Dhaka-team to Tripura on March 9. The agreement included assurances of security of life and property of the tribal people, reservation of jobs for the unemployed youths, financial assistance for construction of houses, to purchase cattles and bullocks, restoration of lands, free ration for nine months, and a general amnesty for the repatriated refugees against whom various charges are pending. Director General of Bangladesh Foreign Ministry's Special Affairs Division, A.S.M. Mobaidul Islam, and Upendralal Chakma, president of Chakma Welfare Association, signed the accord in Tripura. Tripura Deputy Chief Minister, Baiddyanath Majumdar, along with three ministers were due to be present at a brief ceremony at Kathalcharri camp in South Tripura to bid farewell to the refugees. The chief whip of the Bangladesh, Abul Hasnat Abdullah, will receive the refugees at a formal function at Ramgarh from where they will be ferried to their settlement areas.

The Chakma refugees entered India on April 30, 1986, following alleged persecution by Bangladesh Security Forces in southeastern CHT, a 14,200 sq. kms tract rich in gas and oil. The repatriation process was first started in 1994 when 5000-odd Chakmas were sent back to their homes. But soon the process stopped after refugee leaders alleged that Bangladesh was not implementing the rehabilitation package and that the tribal refugees were being harassed by security forces there. The fresh initiative is a result of improved bilateral relationship between India and Bangladesh and efforts by the nine-month old Awami League government of Sheikh Hasina Wajed to solve the refugee crisis. An official spokesman in Agartala, capital of Tripura, said that the state authorities in Tripura have so far spent more than $23 million on the refugees lodged in six camps during the last 11-years. (IRNA)

Niger President Lauds Iran's Medical Assistance

TEHRAN — Head of Iran's Red Crescent Society Seifollah Vahid Dastjerdi in a meeting with Niger President Ibrahim Mainassara discussed Iran's medical assistance to the African state. Vahid Dastjerdi who is currently in Niamey said that Iran has set up a large clinic in Niamey which offers medical service to the deprived and Muslim people of Niger. He added that Tehran has undertaken to put into operation another clinic in the impoverished suburbs of Niamey. Iran has also airlifted 50 tons of foodstuffs which have been distributed through the Iranian Embassy in Niger, he said. Mainassara praised the humanitarian assistance provided by the Iranian government for the needy in Niger. (IRNA)

Balkh Academics Accuse Taleban of Human Rights Violation

MAZAR-E SHARIF — A group of students and professors of Balkh University of Afghanistan accused the Taleban of violation of human rights, restricting women and depriving them from schools. Talking to IRNA, they criticized the oppressive and backward measures taken by the Taleban such as banning girls and women from attending educational institutes and becoming engaged in social activities. The students said that the Taleban do not intend to promote and establish Islamic principles and social justice in the areas under their control. A female university professor stressed that Islam has not deprived women and girls of the right to work and the right to educate and become educated.

A senior political science student questioning validity of the Taleban measures said that absence of women from cultural centers will weaken the foundation of the society. (IRNA)

Rival Iraqi Kurds Accuse Each Other of Human Rights Violations

SANANDAJ, Kurdestan Province — The rival Kurdish groups in northern Iraq accused each other of human rights violation as well as detention and torturing of the advocates of the opposing group. The radio of the Iraqi Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP) said that forces of the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK) of Iraq have arrested tens of Kurds in the areas under their control during the recent days. The radio, monitored here, added that tens of school teachers in Raniyeh and Qaledizeh were arrested last week. Those arrested are accused of receiving monthly salaries from the KDP. On the other hand, the PUK radio accused the KDP leaders of breaching the Ankara agreements and plundering the properties in areas under KDP control. The radio added that the KDP forces have arrested hundreds of Kurds accused of supporting the PUK and involvement in assassination attempts against KDP officials. Meanwhile, the PUK accused the KDP of hampering the activities of the UN observer forces in northern Iraq. UN observer forces to monitor cease-fire in northern Iraq have been stationed in the buffer zones since early this year. The PUK radio, monitored here, added that the KDP leaders and the Baghdad regime consider stationing of observer forces against their interests. (IRNA)

Iraq to Get 400,000 Tons of Wheat by Mid-April

BAGHDAD — More than 400,000 tons of wheat bought under Iraq's oil-for-food deal with the United Nations will be in Iraq by mid April, a UN official said.

Eric Falt, spokesman for Iraq's UN coordinator, said the cargo ship Lima carrying 35,450 tons of Australian wheat was now off the coast of Iraq's southern port of Umm Qasr waiting to unload. After SS Lima 13 more cargo ships loaded with either Australian or French wheat are expected to dock at Umm Qasr in the coming two weeks, Falt said. He said the wheat should cover the needs of more than 20 million Iraqis for at least two months. On Wednesday April 2, the Iraqi government began distributing the first food rations to its citizens under the oil deal which went into effect in December. The deal permits Iraq to export oil worth 2 billion in six months to alleviate the impact of sanctions on its people. The distribution marked the first implementation of the deal based on UN Resolution 986 under which both the oil sales and food distribution must be carried out under strict UN supervision.

Staffan de Mistura, the UN coordinator, said he was pleased to see Iraqis reaping the first benefits of the oil-for- food deal. 986 is alive and walking, he told Reuters. Some 90,000 tons of goods have arrived. The observers are on the spot. The first distribution of wheat flour started 48 hours after the arrival of the first ship, he said. About 120 international observers oversee the arrival, storage, milling and distribution of supplies. They are split into small groups and leave Baghdad for week-long missions in the provinces. Falt said more than 60 contracts had so far been approved by the UN Sanctions Committee, with 28 of them covering purchases of medicine and medical supplies for hospitals and pharmacies. Iraqis, badly hit by UN trade sanctions imposed for Baghdad's 1990 invasion of Kuwait, have received the arrival and distribution of humanitarian supplies with delight. The flow of food has forced down prices of essential commodities in Baghdad. Iraq will get about 1.3 billion of the oil revenue after earmarking 30 percent to compensate victims of its invasion of Kuwait and to defray UN costs. Total requirements for wheat in six months are estimated at 1.3 million tons for which the government has allocated about 307 million. A total of 870 million of the 1.3 billion will be spent on food, and the rest on medicine and supplies for water, sanitation and electricity services. Humanitarian goods worth 260 million will have to go to the three Kurdish provinces of Dahouk, Arbil and Sulaimaniya currently outside the control of the central government in Baghdad. (Reuter)

UNICEF to Spend $190,000 on Assistance and Water Program

LUBANGO, Angola — UNICEF will spend $190,000 to implement an integrated water and sanitation project in the southern province of Cunene. UNICEF Local Water Director Augusto Jamba told ANGOP that, with this amount, it will repair and install 160 water pumps and dig 20 new holes for captation of potable water. Some 315 public and family latrines will also be constructed under the program, as well as public drinking fountains will be recovered. The money will also be used to set up 20 water committees covering 500 people. Besides the UNICEF, the project will be cofinanced by the governments of Holland, Italy and Angola and will benefit 124,000 people of Cuanhama, Namacunde, Ombandja, Cuvelai, Cahama and Curoca municipalities.

The UNICEF is intending to improve the basic indicators of community health and create a much more hygienic environment, through the use of latrines, with the perspective of diminishing child death rate caused by diarrhoeal ailments and malaria.

The Cunene Province is facing water difficulties, which is leading the population into walking long distances on foot in search of water. (IRNA)

NAM Meet in India Likely to Discuss UN Restructuring

NEW DELHI — The restructuring of the United Nations, Nuclear Disarmament and Environmental Conservation and Economic Development are likely to come for discussion at the two-day Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) foreign ministers' meeting beginning here in New Delhi on April 7. The meeting is being held at a time when the movement's relevance is being questioned by critics in view of the end of the Cold War. Briefing newsmen, the Secretary in the External Affairs Ministry, Kamlesh Sharma, said the foreign ministers meeting would be preceded by senior officials meeting on April 4 and 5. He said as many as 70 foreign ministers of 114 member-countries have confirmed their participation. Members of both 'NATO' and former 'Warsaw Pact' have applied to join the movement or to be associated with it as observers or guests. The officials meeting would be inaugurated by the External Affairs Minister of India, I.K. Gujral, while the Prime Minister H.D. Deve Gowda would open the ministerial meeting. The United Nations Secretary General, Kofi Annan, who would be visiting New Delhi primarily to attend the conference, would also deliver his address. The conference would adopt a final document which would be finalized by senior officials. In addition, a New Delhi declaration, highlighting issues of particular interest or concern, was expected to be adopted. A final decision on reported next NAM summit in South Africa would also be taken by the ministerial meeting, added Sharma. (IRNA)

Swedish Official Stresses Importance of Iran-EU Dialog

BONN — Swedish acting Foreign Minister Jan Eliasson in a meeting with Iranian Ambassador to Stockholm Abdullah Nowrouzi in the Swedish capital underlined the need for continuation of dialog between the European Union (EU) and Iran.

The two sides also stressed the important role Iran plays in the Middle East and mutual cooperation in various fields at bilateral and international levels. (IRNA)

Situation of Muslim Minorities in Western Countries Deplorable

VIENNA — Iranian Representative, Ali Reza Ghanavi, in his address to the human rights commission in Geneva deplored the situation of Muslim minorities in Western countries, and said that enough attention was not being paid to the rights of Muslim citizens in these countries. He said that while there was an effective mechanism in Western countries against anti-Jewish sentiments, there was too much to be desired for the legal rights of the growing Muslim community, and some countries were even trying to revive the old anti-Islamic attitude of the Crusades. The 53rd session of the Human Rights Commission started work in Geneva on March 10 with participation of representatives of member countries. The Iranian representative pointed that the Muslims were sometimes labelled as 'fundamentalists' in a bid to fan religious discrimination and thereby tighten political, social and legal pressures against them. Such discrimination has led to acts of arson and setting afire of homes and religious places of Muslims in the West, and there is no legal support to save Muslim lives and properties, he added. (IRNA)

Happy New Year

New Year Blessed With Birth Anniversary of Imam Reza (AS)

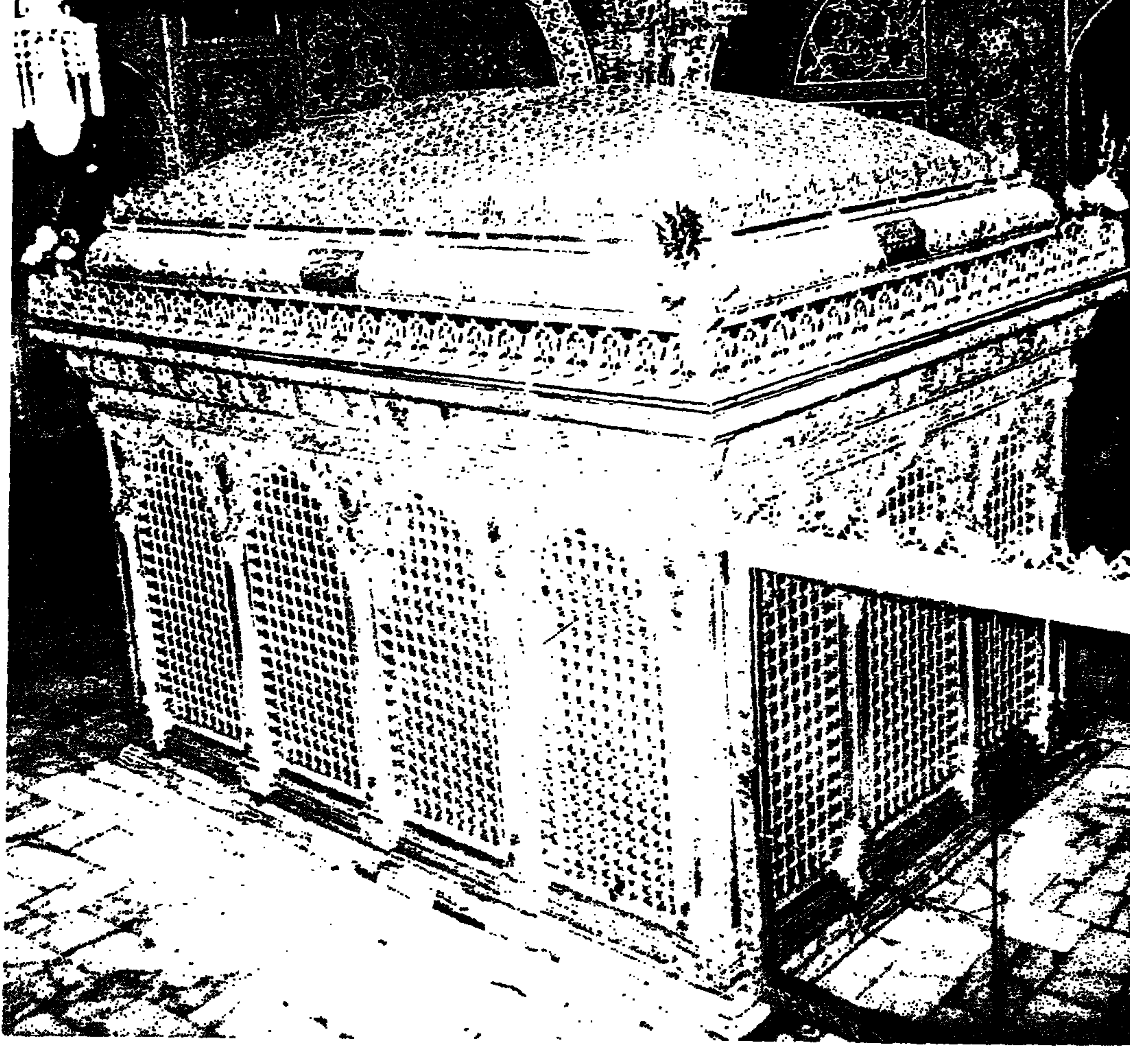
TEHRAN (March 20) — This year the birth anniversary of Imam Reza (11th Zil-Qa'deh), the 8th infallible Imam of the Prophet's household, coincides with the start of the year 1376 of the solar Hijra.

Imam Reza (PBUH) was born in Medina 148 A.H. (765 A.D.) and succeeded to the imamate of the *ummah* at the age of 35 following the martyrdom of his illustrious father, Imam Musa ibn Ja'far al-Kazem, through poisoning in the prison in Baghdad of the Abbassid tyrant Haroun al-Rashid.

For 20 years Imam Reza was the divinely designated Imam of mankind, and during this period the followers of the Prophet's household, managed to involve themselves in political activities.

There were several revolutions against the Abbassid oppressors by the faithful in Mecca, Medina, Kufa, Basra, Yemen, North Africa and Khorassan.

The crafty Ma'moun, after emerging successful in the civil war against his elder brother Amin, sensed the gravity of the situation and the growing love for the Prophet's Ahl-ul-Bait of the *ummah*, which had been so treacherously cheated over half a century ago by his ancestors who hijacked popular sentiments against the Omayyuds to usurp the caliphate themselves.



He resorted to a stratagem, and offered to abdicate the caliphate in favor of Imam Reza (AS), but the Imam knowing full well the strategy of the caliph, politely declined with the curt answer that if the caliphate was Ma'moun's then he was not right in offering to others what belonged to him legally, and if it was not, then he had no right to offer to others what does not belong to him in the first place.

Ma'moun resorted to veil threats and compelled the Imam to agree to become his heir apparent. The Imam, reluctantly accepted on condition that he would be excused from interfering in state affairs, and that neither would he appoint anyone to a post nor dismiss him.

Imam Reza (AS) knew that the time was not ripe for him to assume direct rule since the support which the masses displayed to him was largely sentimental and could therefore turn out to be catastrophic considering the mess that the whole system was in, following over a century and a half of deliberate distortion and tyranny since the martyrdom of his noble ancestor Imam Ali ibn Abi Taleb in 40 A.H.

Ma'moun on the other hand thought it the most effective way of curbing the activities against Abbassid misrule, and duly invited Imam Reza (AS) from Medina to Khorassan for official investiture. He thought that once tainted with politics the haloed image of the Imam among the Muslims would be tarnished.

He was grossly wrong. The Imam's journey although under official escort and through a predetermined route brought enthusiastic masses to cheer the successor of their Prophet (S) all the way. The incident at Neishabour, where the Imam recited the famous 'Tradition of the Golden Chain' (*Hadith Silsalat az-Zahabia*) to a packed assembly of 17,000 scribes was alarming for the regime.

For almost two years the Imam was in this uneasy relationship with Ma'moun, who went to great extremes in his hypocrisy by substituting the black state colors of the Abbassids with the green of the Bani Hashem and even minting coins in Imam Reza's name.

The Imam, however, held fast to the *sunnah* of the Prophet , expounding to the people the teachings of Islam and frustrating the caliph's plans.

The *Eid al-Fitr* prayer at Merv (presently in Turkmenistan) was another great blow to the caliph's designs, and seeing the public welcome for Imam Reza (AS), he was advised by his ministers to stop the Imam halfway to the *musalla*. But it turned out to be a double disaster for Ma'moun, with popularity increasing for the Imam and resentment growing against the Abbassid caliphate.

He finally decided to leave Khorassan for Baghdad and while stopping at Toos on the way, resorted to the cowardly act of his prdecessors and administered poison to Imam Reza (AS). The dose proved fatal and the eighth infallible heir of the Prophet (S) left for his heavenly abode in the month of Safar in the year 203 A.H. at the age of 55.

The Imam was laid to rest in Sanabad beside the grave of Haroun, but soon the traces of the grave of Ma'moun's father were obliterated, as Sanabad grew into a sprawling city called Mashhad al-Reza (martyrdom place of Reza) or simply Mashhad as it is known today.

The golden-domed shrine complex of Imam Reza (AS) is the most holy place in Iran, with pilgrims from every part of the country and from other countries of the world flocking to pay their homage to the Prophet's descendent.

He is the only one of the 11 martyred Imams of the Prophet's household, whose shrine is in Iran. Of the other ten, the shrines of 6 Imams are in Iraq — Imam Ali (AS) in Najaf, Imam Hussein (AS) in Karbala, Imam Kazem (AS) and Imam Javad (AS) in Kazemain near Baghdad and Imam Hadi (AS) and Imam Askari (AS) in Samarra — while Imam Hassan (AS), Imam Zain al-Abedin (AS), Imam Mohammad al- Baqer (AS) and Imam Ja'far al-Sadeq (AS) rest in Jannat al-Baqie in Medina. Imam Mahdi (AS) 12th and last infallible Imam is in occultation and will reappear to fill the world with justice and equity as it would be brimming with tyranny and oppression.

This year, because of the coincidence of Norouz on the eve of Imam Reza's birth anniversary, hundreds of thousands of people have taken to Mashhad from four corners of Iran to usher in the New Year beside the holy shrine.

It is a living proof that while Abbassid rule has long been forgotten and Ma'moun's realm divided into scores of independent countries, the Imam of the Prophet's household continues to rule the hearts of people around the globe.

No doubt, the expounding of the genuine principles of Islam by Imam Reza (AS) and his famous debates, as recorded in books, with leading scholars of other religions and even atheists were not without fruit.

(IRNA)

French Museums Seeking Owners of Art Recovered From Germany

PARIS — With an exhibit spread among a half dozen museums, France is showing hundreds of works recovered from Germany after World War II as it tries to counter criticism it's not done enough to find their owners.

"I want complete openness," France's Culture Minister, Philippe Douste-Blazy, told a news conference Wednesday. "If the inheritors, the rightful owners of the works can prove they're the inheritors, the works will be returned to them. "

Unveiling 71 works at the news conference, officials said about 900 works would be put on display starting next week at the Louvre, Orsay, the Pompidou Center, the National China Museum in Sevres and Versailles.

They include masterpieces by Matisse, Picasso, Renoir, Monet, Manet, Sisley, Rubens and Courbet.

"The national museum authority has been criticized for not having systematically displayed these works," Douste-Blazy admitted.

He said the exhibit, to open April 8 and run several weeks, was an effort to show that "reality is more complex than rumors about French museums 'concealing' veritable 'treasures' looted from Jewish families by the Nazis."

Officials say the government simply can't find the owners.

A middle-age Parisian Jewish couple at the news conference, encouraged by the minister's speech, searched the collection for the art confiscated from their grandparents.

"We have no proof, no sales slips, nothing," said Yves declining to give his last name. "The family can prove nothing. So what are we supposed to do?"

Some 45,000 french-owned art works were found in Germany after the war. About 2,000 were never returned to their owners or their heirs.

Francoise Cachin, director of the National Museum authority, told reporters "the vast majority" of the works were sold to the Nazis. Scholars agree the rest may have been confiscated from Jews deported from France to Nazi death camps.

In 1943, the allies signed a treaty annulling all commercial transactions made by the occupying forces, even those which may have appeared legal.

"If the art market in France flourished during the war, it was because German officers and collaborators were loaded with money to spend," Cachin said in an interview. "But plenty of non-Jews sold off paintings to galleries, which later sold them to Germans."

The decision to display the art comes in the wake of a recent government audit of museum authorities that found they had failed to sufficiently publicize the existence of the art works.

Jewish groups say the art represents a small percentage of the assets confiscated from Jews. A government commission has been formed to study the extent of pillaging by the pro-Nazi Vichy regime.

About 75,000 Jews were deported to their deaths in Nazi camps.

Only 2,500 survived.

Among the works seeking an owner are Manet's *"Bateau Dans le Port,"* Monet's *"Coin d'Atelier"* and pastel drawings by Renoir including studies for his famed *"Bathers"* series.

For the first time, information concerning the work's last known owner is printed on a small plaque next to the work. In many cases, however, it's a case of "origin unknown. "

Heirs must provide documents, photographs or irrefutable testimony to prove ownership.

Meanwhile, museum officials continue searching for clues in the 800 cartons of archives pertaining to the art treasures. Compiled by Rose Valland, a scrupulous wartime museum archivist, they may hold clues to unraveling the mysteries of wartime ownership.

The notes have been in storag at the Foreign Affairs Ministr since 1991 and are not available t the public.

A list of the art works has been available on the Internet since November. Cachin said 60,000 consultations have been recorded vis the web site, but none has led tr the restitution of a work.

(AP)

